

**An Engagement with  
the Phenomenology of Leadership**

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful parents, Ike and Natalie Gilinsky, who continue to inspire me by how they live and care. Their belief in my abilities have been sustaining throughout the process.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to speak of some of those who have walked the way with me, and others who have contributed to my thesis journey.

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## **Statement of Authentication**

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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**Claire Jankelson**

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## Abstract

The quantity of emerging literature on the subject of leadership testifies to the urgency that is felt in these times for understanding it. The phenomenon of leadership is a subtle one and each author is at pains to justify their particular slant on its nature. This thesis shifts away from trying to find essential qualities of leadership that are generically applicable and instead considers leadership as it is experienced. It therefore examines leadership as a personal phenomenon regardless of the position held. The phenomenon is recognised through the experience of those who are present to its influence. This includes the practitioner, in any role or job, for whom the experience of leadership is necessarily personal and its expression evolving rather than static.

I have chosen the method of conversation to identify the presence of such a phenomenon. This provides an expansive format which, because it is a lived experience, provides access to people's experience of leadership, both their own and that of others'. I have used reflexive and imaginative writing processes to express and develop theory and praxis. Through these means, I have examined leadership as an engagement and used myself as a presence in order to develop insight.

The thesis draws on the philosophical tradition of Goethe, Husserl, Bohm and Varela to understand the nature of experience and change; qualitative researchers like Van Manen, Crotty and Reason to develop reflective tools of inquiring; and leadership thinkers such as Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer and Mintzberg to find more vital ways of considering the very human experience of leadership in these times of rapid change.

The thesis showcases an evaluation of leadership in a medium-sized industrial organisation in Western Australia. The task of the study was to assess the change in leadership in the whole organisation as a result of management attending a leadership program. For this purpose, phenomenological research methods were used to provide an in-depth and experientially based methodology.

Narrative analysis offered the ground for capturing the presence of leadership through expressing the whole spectrum of voices in the organisation. Further, first-person

methods brought relational sensitivity and researcher engagement, immersion and leadership. The evaluation resulted in a confronting report that enabled new ways of hearing between management and non-management and the organisation was enabled to take its next steps forward consensually.

The study is followed by three exploratory chapters that deal with:

- How does the 'new' get dreamed up?
- What are the big issues of leadership that challenge the establishment?
- What does change actually imply and why is this so important to leadership?

I protest the flippancy with which organisational consultants and leaders confuse structural change with the change that people really desire.

The crystallisation of my exploration into the phenomenon of leadership transpires through a synchronous event. This was a personal experience of leadership. I apply a classical philosophical phenomenological analysis to my story as a narrative. This results in a new theoretical framework which I have called confluent leadership: the interaction of the constellations of synchronicity, clarity of intention and co-creativity.<sup>1</sup> The appreciation of these influences within one's role is a meaning-making or enhancing process. This can result in greater engagement with one's role or perhaps the realisation that one is in the wrong job!

The centrality of my own engagement, a feature of the research conducted through this thesis, has resulted in the development of a passion for the subject of leadership and an enthusiasm for the possibilities of advancing and applying many of the ideas introduced. I have found that in order to find leadership, one has to bring leadership and the quality of that intention determines what one finds. Similarly, when leadership is experienced in a workplace, others are influenced to present the best of their own leadership. There is always the possibility for each person to enhance their own experience of leadership to become more integrated, wholesome and passionate about their work. The potentiality of this excites me.

<sup>1</sup> Confluent is my own word and is a combination of the words consciousness and influence. It is the conscious influence of the three constellations of synchronicity, clarity of intention and co-creativity. Each of these has been very specifically defined; their meanings are carefully discussed in the body of the thesis.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*It's I am in a hotel lounge on the north coast of Queensland. The last cocktails are on the house and the conference participants are still milling around. A man takes a seat on the couch adjacent to mine and we begin talking. Starting tentatively, our pace is slow, silences or small giggles often suspended within the orbit of our shared space. Then there are no more beginnings. We talk. The space around us soon fills with our created atmosphere. The words direct us; we have no idea where they will take us. As each sentence is digested, the moment is held and gives rise to the next. The dialogue crosses the boundaries of niceties, easily forcing its way through the borders of relationships, music, personal longings, parenthood and spiritual needs. As I describe areas of discontent and difficulty in my life, I am hearing these for the first time. Many of my views and thoughts and feelings are a surprise to me. It is like a life-reality check. The past has no relevance, and the future is like a dream. There is simply the present; a meeting of two souls; a sense of being drawn to another; a mutual interest; a mutual attraction. Hearing and feeling deeply heard, by the other. A process that inquired deeply of whom and how we were in the world, of one another and to one another. This inquiry was more like a revelation. Yet it was a deep inquiry, for by the time we parted, we had a profound knowledge and appreciation of the other. I never did find out his name or where he came from!*

It was a strange moment in time. More like a moment out of time. A deeply satisfying conversation between two complete strangers! It had no connection with anything known; yet it was profound and I was deeply affected both by the content of what was said, the process of the conversation and the quality of the engagement. I had, in that short time, recognised aspects of my life that were unfulfilling and needed redressing. I clearly saw those qualities that I appreciate and would like to nurture further about myself. My use of language was different, perhaps more conscious or more exact. I had named things or noticed aspects about my life that had not been named before. I left the conversation with a renewed sense of courage to carefully consider these ideas.

That conversation invited speculation on what the ingredients of the meeting were:

- The experience was complete and thereby deeply satisfying. It ended when it ended and my belief is that he (the other) felt as fulfilled by it as I did.



- The engagement was such that ‘we were carried away’ by it. It was as if we had an orbit surrounding us and the hotel lobby faded into the distance like background music.
- There was no coercion or directing. The content and quality of engagement emerged out of the combination of each person’s presence.
- The quality of relationship was inherently respectful. The words were heard without judgement, were valued as meaningful, and were the catalyst for the next sentence. The experience was that of being ‘utterly present to another’.
- Modes of expression and even the language used were often quite different to my usual forms. I seemed to be operating quite intuitively.

Goethe calls conversation the art of arts. The creative spirit of the speaker partakes in the creative process of the cosmos as the thinker uses all of him/herself as a tool of knowledge (Spock 1983). Steiner (1999) speaks of conversation as taking place across the earthly thresholds and into the etheric world.<sup>1</sup> He offers the following scene from Goethe’s fairy tale, ‘The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily’:

‘Whence came you hither?’ asked the golden king.  
‘Out of the clefts where the gold dwells’, replied the serpent.  
‘What is more glorious than gold?’  
‘Light’.  
‘What is more quickening than light?’  
‘Conversation’.

In reviewing the nature of most conversations, however, qualities such as ‘more glorious than gold’ or ‘more quickening than light’ are unlikely to be commonly attributed to conversation. The reply given by the serpent may have disappointed the reader, as there are surely many things ‘more quickening than light’.<sup>2</sup>

Conversation is a term that is usually used lightly. It refers to most interchanges, from the most superficial levels of chit-chat and mindless associative ramblings,

<sup>1</sup> *Etheric* can be seen as the living or energetic world just above and beyond the physical world. So conversation can be seen as bridging the rational with the imaginative and the embodied with the abstract.

<sup>2</sup> In this mythology, like many others, the serpent is seen as carrier of the wisdom, the one who really knows.

to various forms of mental exercising that involve opinions, argument, speculation and debate. The serpent was not referring to this.

The term 'quickenings' is defined as: restore or give life to, to quicken the imagination, to become more active or sensitive, to become alive, and to receive life (Macquarie 1990). Quickening is compared with animating, enlivening, rousing, stimulating, vitalizing, vivifying (Collins 1993).

Conversation has this capacity, however it requires particular circumstances that may be characterised by:

- An engagement with another or with a group where one accurately expresses an intrinsic response to the present. It may exceed its usual form.
- An experience where one feels affected and listened to, by another.
- Occurring with another person or through writing and the expressive arts (where the other becomes the piece of work).
- An experience that is slightly confusing and equally is accompanied by a feeling that something important has happened.

In conversation, the mutual engagement gives rise to stepping out of one's natural comfort zones and into uncharted territory. For this reason, as well as the above characterisations, the nature of conversation has directly influenced and directed the way I began thinking about the experience of leadership.

Leadership surely involves those same capacities of deep engagement, of stepping out of routine ways, of responding to the needs of the situation. The link between the two becomes more apparent in considering conversation as a metaphor for the engagement required in leadership. The art of conversation provides a valuable launching pad for a journey into leadership, for in the conversation as in leadership, an individual consciously responds by bringing their 'leading edge' to their participation in ways that are risky leading to results that are unpredictable.<sup>3</sup>

In researching leadership, I have been drawn to and sought methodologies that resonated with this quality of engagement.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> I have used *their* to denote the singular *his* or *her*. Writing both genders on every occasion becomes clumsy and I have therefore used the plural pronoun throughout the thesis to denote the male or female or both.

<sup>4</sup> The word risky can also be read as spontaneous or unpremeditated.

## **Introducing the method**

The introduction has begun with an anecdote and short analysis, evincing my method that will continue throughout the thesis. I will continue with a discussion defining the usage of the terms in the title of the thesis. This will be done in detail, as the terms are used in particular and unusual ways. I will then discuss the nature of my writing to explain how intrinsic the writing is to the unfolding research and the topic. The writing and the research are shown to be a continuous mirroring of one another and their interaction drives the thesis forward. I will then discuss the various factors, historical and philosophical, that have led to this topic. I mention theories and thinkers that have particularly influenced my ideas. The introduction concludes with an overview of the chapters, showing how each builds towards a phenomenology of leadership.

## **Leadership, as experience**

Leadership, as a subject in itself, has to be distinguished from the experience of leadership, which is the focus of this work. The experience of leadership is a form of inner positioning where an individual authors their engagement or can be said to ‘take lead’ of themselves.<sup>5</sup> The opposite of this is a reactive state where there is no awareness of self-directing or conscious responding to the needs of the situation. The experience of leadership is thus a way of being, a quality, more than anything specifically that is being done. It does not assume anything more about the nature of the experience than what a subject reports. Thus, the experience of leadership comes about through a personal reflection, reporting on and describing an individual or a group’s engagement with a task or with a role.

In this thesis, the experience of leadership is studied mainly in relation to organisational settings where the nature of how leadership is experienced as a personal phenomenon is considered irrespective of whether a formal position of leadership is held. It may coincide with a position. One can certainly name leaders in a position of leadership who don’t appear to carry a leadership quality, and others who are not in a leadership position but who obviously take a leadership

<sup>5</sup> The language is a little clumsy, but it is important to distinguish the self-directed aspects of the action from the ‘taking lead’ of others, which is how leadership is usually understood.

role in their participation in the organisation. The field of leadership, as experience, considers the relationship of the subject to their work and to themselves and the possible effect on others in their environment.

The conversational model exemplifies the active and engaging aspects of leadership, as experienced. There is always a choice in how one engages in a task or a work assignment or a conversation. The difference in one's experience is significant. The question: 'What is the difference between engaging in a task with leadership or without leadership?' is a guiding question in embarking on this subject. The answer is not easily measurable or quantifiable, but the consideration of the difference in the two poles provides a sense of the quality being considered in approaching the phenomenon of leadership.

The word 'leadership' does not fully describe the quality that I intend to explore. The word evokes the idea of performance in high positions and this meaning is not my connotation. It may be useful for explanatory purposes to compare leadership with teaching. As an adult, the influence or role of teacher in relation to children is carried, irrespective of whether one is in a position of teaching. So, it is evident that one is always in the role of a teacher. Then, as a teacher (in the position), it is variable when the teacher is being an educator. Of course, a teacher is not an educator all of the time, but hopefully will be an educator on occasion. The experience of the teacher as educator can be made evident through engaging in a reflection with the students. It can also be evinced through engaging with the teacher on reflection about their sense of their performance. The distance between being a teacher and being an educator is qualitatively similar to what I am expressing in relation to leadership. It lies in an inner or personal engagement with the tasks of life and work, quite apart from holding a leadership position.

The presence of leadership is thus a subtle phenomenon. It is more often suggestive of its presence than substantive in its expression. It may be evidenced rather than known directly. Its expression seems to come out of the 'in-between', like a third presence between the first person and the other. Like the denouement to a plot, it is the outcome of the conversation. Expressions of leadership take

varied forms depending on the landscape in which they operate. Leadership is emergent, like a precipitation. Its language of expression is dynamic (in that it shows a current or movement within), continuously re-authored and because of its open, unstructured and variable individualistic expression may be said to be more poetic than practical.

There are many books in the marketplace that deal with leadership as a goal, as an entity to be achieved. It is not my intention to examine leadership as an outcome, as an independent concept or a thing in itself. In this thesis, leadership is considered as an experience and therefore always relative to the one experiencing it (the subject).

Leadership can thus be seen as a phenomenon, always in relation to someone. It is how leadership is experienced that is of interest here. Although leadership is palpable in its presence both to the one who is 'leading' and often to those who are present, it is only subtly identifiable and experientially known. It thus requires an equally subtle method to locate it. The method of choice for researching the phenomenon of leadership is phenomenology, for its locus of research is that of human experience (Polkinghorne 1989).

## **Towards Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a research method that is directed towards the experience of the world, or a phenomenon. In this case, the inquiry is towards how leadership is experienced. The ways of knowing that emerge through phenomenology come directly out of experience or the ways of being in the world. A phenomenon is relational. Theorising proceeds through a clearly stated orientation, the object of the investigation. Leadership is the orientation almost like a single thought or direction, a quest to which the attention of the thesis is directed.

Husserl, considered by many to be the father of Phenomenology, argues that the fundamental structure of consciousness is intentional (Spiegelberg, 1994). Crotty (1996), a critical and prolific writer on classical phenomenology, sees phenomenology as a discipline that calls into question what is usually taken for

granted. Phenomenology is thereby critique or critical methodology where the focus, or the intention, lies in how a phenomenon is experienced and this experience results in meaning being constructed. In order to open oneself to one's experience, an attitude of surrender is required and thus Spiegelberg (1994) says that phenomenology begins in silence.

Phenomenology is sometimes described as the 'clarification of the life world'.<sup>6</sup> It is in the clarifying, always beginning with a person's own experience of the phenomenon under investigation, that a phenomenology eventuates. The relaying of one's experience is a personal description. When the description is sourced from one's experience, the speaking of it becomes an experience for the teller and the listener: 'A description is a powerful one if it awakens our basic experience of the phenomenon it describes, and in such a manner that we experience the more foundational grounds of the experience' (Van Manen 1990, p.114). The explicating process is both the source and the object of phenomenological research. It takes place through the medium of a conversation, either with another or as an internal dialogue. The result of what is imparted in the conversational process is less a quantifiable entity than a gift.<sup>7</sup> Its delivery is delicate and, like a creative or artistic expression, requires openness and receptivity to its conception. Therefore, the researcher or the second person present becomes part of the knowledge formation, and the delivery is unique to that particular point in time.

## **Towards the Psychological**

For the purposes of researching leadership in ways that are engaging and yet do not compromise scholarship, a very particular phenomenological method is threaded consistently through this study. This thesis does not use a fixed set of methodological principles with clearly delineated sequential features and it is also not a rigid phenomenological study. It is more like a psychological approach to phenomenology. It is psychological in the James Hillman (1992) sense, where the

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Todres, a prolific author on phenomenology from Bournemouth University, told me this definition in 2000. He himself was unsure how he came to it.

<sup>7</sup> This meaning of gift is from Hyde (1999). The voluntary nature as well as the aesthetic and delicate quality of that which comes directly from experience is comparable to an artistic endeavour: '...a gift is a thing we do not get by our own efforts. We cannot buy it; we cannot acquire it through an act of will. It is bestowed upon us' Hyde (1999, p.xi).

joy and the satisfaction is in the engagement with another, in the grappling towards finding what seems to be ‘below the surface’ understanding or meaning. If *psyche* is the soul and *logos* is the meaning or word, then the psychological is the realm of soul-making.

Soul-making is the existential aspect of looking deeper, the process of finding out or finding within. This aspect of re-searching or looking again is an orientation that is found in the inquiring processes and is particularly prevalent in writing and reporting.

An inquiry implies an inquirer. As the researcher in this work, my voice will be present and assertive. One of the manifestations of the psychological orientation will manifest as narrative clarifications of the experience of the researcher. The inquiry into leadership is therefore presented transparently. It is anticipated that this will prove engaging for the reader.

## **Towards Method**

The method continuously turns towards and opens or submits to the phenomenon of leadership, as a living presence. Method therefore serves the phenomenon and the techniques needed are altered to suit the particular demands of this thesis. The methodology of phenomenology avoids fixed methods or techniques of researching (Van Manen 1990). Heidegger compared phenomenological reflection to finding paths in the woods where signs identifying the way forward will make themselves apparent (Van Manen 1990). I bring my engagement, imagination, and a creative and intellectual palette of curiosity to the phenomenon. The inquiry is a balancing of conceptualisation, application, expression and consciousness.

Intellectual integrity arises out of bringing questions and consciously opening to knowing, expressing what is found, conceptually making sense and then considering the possible application of the findings. The word ‘inquiry’ is used as a ready willingness on the part of the author to find out. Beginning from a naïve position in the subjective experience of the world, the conditions in which knowing occur are continuously reflected on and clarified.

Giorgi (2002) discusses the similarity between the phenomenological situation and an experimental one, in that both expect an understanding of the conditions in which valid knowledge can be achieved. In this study, the original conditions are frequently expressed from the subjective experience of the author. The first person experience of the author is thus the first step in the knowledge formation process. Husserl, through spokesperson Giorgi, considers phenomenology to be a philosophy of intuition and it is therefore not possible to remove subjectivity. Intuition in phenomenology means 'present to consciousness' and this faculty is used in creating the descriptions that form the data source.<sup>8</sup> These are the outcomes of engaging in a phenomenological study for they capture that which is present in the lived experience.

Lived experience is a simple concept but not easily explicable. Paraphrasing Merleau-Ponty (1962), Gadamer (1998), and Van Manen (1990), it is a recollection of experience in such a way that the experience is internally relived and thereby apprehended. It has an embodied aspect as the experience is lived again through the body. The apprehension is thus a way of 'construing experience' (Heron 1998, p.41). The illumination comes through 'looking again' or rather 'feeling again' the experience being examined. The method has to thus draw on the lived experience in order to approach leadership as an experience.

As an example, consider I inquire directly into another's experience of work. Their usual response will be an automatic one, either intellectually or habitually driven. However, if the other takes the time and has the patience to allow their actual experience of work as a lived sensing to arise within them, their response emerges as a description of their intuition.<sup>9</sup> They now recollect their lived experience and their response is also a lived experience. Their experience of the

<sup>8</sup> This usage is different from the way intuition is usually conceptualised where intuition is a way of direct knowing without the application of thought. Phenomenological intuition is the invitation to go within oneself and then open oneself to the phenomenon. It is like contemplation without any intellectualisation.

<sup>9</sup> Intuitive simply means the response is not intellectually considered. It is immediately given in response to an embodied awareness or memory.



workplace is freshly construed or apprehended based on this lived or felt sense.<sup>10</sup> Their response emerges out of that moment and that interaction: ‘A good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience...’ (Van Manen 1990, p.27). Lived experience is also referred to as the felt experience. The descriptions are considered satisfactory when they resonate with and adequately recollect the felt sense of the lived experience. The method is like a series of processes that continuously and consistently draw on experience in a sensitive and observant way towards clarifying and making sense of the experience (of leadership).

## **The Writing**

The title of this thesis (An engagement with the phenomenology of leadership) bridges areas whose meeting provides a fertile field for a generative inquiry: the quality of an engagement, the method of phenomenology and the nature of leadership. The three are integrated through the person leading the inquiry, myself. The journey into the phenomenology of leadership is necessarily also a reflection of my own journey into leadership. Finally, there is one more essential component and this is the means of expression of the previous four aspects. The language is used to construct the subjectivity and therefore also the knowledge formation. It is the centrepiece of the work

The intention for the writing is towards promoting and expressing a phenomenological perspective by making the inquiry a lived experience for the reader and the author. This process necessarily involves integrating the subjective experience of the author and therefore, the intentions and reflections of the author are articulated transparently and unashamedly at crucial points of the inquiry. This approach is in line with a poststructuralist perspective, which places the discourse as the means through which new knowledge is created (Richardson 1997).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1962, p.214) refers to ‘sensibility’ as the immediate awareness. Thus the awareness of the sensible is the lived experience. The sensible is manifest with or without the awareness being posited.

<sup>11</sup> The poststructuralist movement bring the human factor back into the shaping of meaning in combination with the discourse. The structuralists focused only on the structure of the discourse (Richardson 1997).

Furthermore, the subject of inquiry is the experience of leadership and in the spirit of reflexivity, the expression of the author's intentions and motivations are essential and serve the subject.

There are two further reasons for writing reflexively, descriptively, using a narrative style and including reverie and metaphor. The first is a pedagogical reason in that I would like this work to be useful to researchers who may wish to replicate similar research methods in other applications. Because the methods are not systematically created, the breadth, the intentions and the vision need to be imparted. This requires language that is expansive and is able to express the ineffable. The final reason for my writing style follows under the next heading.

### **Academic writing**

*Sad is Eros, builder of cities*  
W.H. Auden<sup>12</sup>

In his eulogy to Freud, Auden commiserates with Freud in his contemplation of how modern cities have lost their 'Eros', their soulful aspects. This is their connection to the emotions, the relationships, the soulful or feeling aspects that give them character and vibrancy and their particular flavour. In contrast cities are becoming more and more minimalist, utilitarian and functional. I believe his complaints with regard to cities apply equally to academic writing where it appears that their emotional impact has been washed out. Academic writing attempts to use as few words as possible and those used are shaped such that the emotion, the evocativeness and any immediacy of engagement with the reader is disavowed. Richardson (1997, p.87) confesses how she has 'yawned' her way through qualitative research PhD theses. Qualitative research was intended to be a reaction to the dispassionate nature of quantitative research. Yet whilst the topics are often fascinating, the monographs are dull. This is because qualitative research

<sup>12</sup> This line is from a poem called 'In Memory of Sigmund Freud', by Auden (1907–1973), Anglo-American poet and essayist.

It is part of the following sequence:

One rational voice is dumb: over a grave

The household of Impulse mourns one dearly loved.

Sad is Eros, builder of cities,

And weeping anarchic Aphrodite.

Cited in Auden, W. H. & Mendelson, E. (1977).

carries its meaning in the reading and in order to create vital texts, the writing has to be attended to as a method of inquiry (Richardson 1997).

I am determined that were Richardson to read this thesis, her eyes would be open with intrigue, rather than shut with fatigue. I would like my words to engage the reader's imagination such that the language itself will be the bearer of meaning. I see language as being both a conduit of meaning as well as able to evoke meaning making in the reader. Language has the power to evoke resonance, much as one person can inspire in another. Through the use of phenomenological rich textual description, I offer the reader an alternative form of approaching the material being explored in this thesis. This route has a narrative voice, often subjective, that aims to express the fullness of what could equally have been described intellectually. The intellectual aspects of the material will be woven into the text, thereby included seamlessly rather than specifically.

These forms of expression are an appropriate mode for the approach that I am adopting to the subject under discussion. Leadership is written up in countless books as a skill that is achievable through the adopting of particular steps or the embarking on specific training. This thesis will attempt to grasp the phenomenon of leadership as an experience that is lived; it is therefore necessarily subjective.

It is intriguing how frequently writers on phenomenology discuss the importance of phenomenological writing being distinctive and reflexive in its expression.

Here I think of the discussion of recursive writing in Heidegger (1962) and the rich description in Van Manen (1990) and yet, I seldom find writers genuinely using writing itself as a tool of research in order to express their ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Richardson (1997) discusses the possibility of expressing sociology through using narrative. In her book *Fields of Play*, she devotes most of the book to making a case for the 'stuckness' in which academic life, especially sociology, finds itself. She eventually offers a short dramatic narrative piece called *Louisa May's Story of Her Life* (1997, p.131), and then for the remainder of the book discusses the

<sup>13</sup> The notion of a rich description was popularised by Clifford Geertz (1973) and applied further by Van Manen (1990).

relative value of that piece. Whilst Richardson writes from the first person point of view, she is tentative in actually offering artistic means of expression. There is little manifestation of the ‘play’ she longs for.

It is complex to forge a path through academic writing that manages to conform adequately to the genre, offers the level of scholarship expected, and yet takes risk with new forms of expression. Perhaps this is a manifestation of my preparedness for leadership that I have taken on this challenge. The following issues about language and expression co-exist as concerns and questions in this inquiry and its expression:

- In academia generally, the actual quality of the writing is not taken seriously. The prime intention is the message and as long as this is expressed clearly and convincingly, the writing itself is not judged. In general, some scholars are good writers and some not, but this is secondary. What could it mean to focus on the means of expression itself?<sup>14</sup>
- My academic training has been towards analysis of the study in focus but not of my own experience. The traditional encouragement is towards analysing experience out of the text. What is involved in the production of texts that include the personal component?
- The usual separation of analysis and reflection implies that the more ‘personal’ aspects are somewhat inessential to the core. There are no clear standards for the critique and the boundaries of personal writing. At what point does reflexive writing become narcissistic and self-indulgent?

I retain the above as questions that will be examined at various points during the thesis. For now, I am guided by these intentions in the writing:

- Make this a good story.<sup>15</sup>
- Enable the audibility of usually unheard voices, thereby crossing the boundaries of power and exclusion.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> I am grateful to Richardson (1997) for alerting me to some of these tensions.

<sup>15</sup> There are many meanings to such a phrase, one of which could be ‘untrue’. Here I refer to a story that the reader will engage with and enjoy reading and that accurately reflects the intent and the impact of the story.

<sup>16</sup> By voices, I imply those within myself as well as those of the research subjects. I also include the marginal voices of the academic world; those who have to change to conform to academic

- Ground the analysis in the situations that produced them.
- Provide transparency in intention and experience.

## **Contributing influences**

This is not the first time in my life I am taking a slightly risky path. Many of the contributing factors to my current thoughts about leadership have transpired through stepping out of the expected. I would like to now detail the events and work/study involvements that have directly influenced both the methodological inclinations and the subject curiosities that have resulted in this thesis on a phenomenology of leadership. Many of the influences can be traced to events in South Africa where I grew up during the long and dark days of apartheid. I suspect that my insistence on acknowledging the individual, and an ethical treatment of the other, irrespective of their position in life, stems from having been caught in such a system. A South African connection first brought the idea of personal leadership and this same connection offered the opportunity for the crystallisation of my ideas of leadership (Chapter 8). The changes in that country in relation to leadership and the people of that place have inspired me to consider and to be suspicious of change, as a significant aspect of leadership (Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). Outside of the South African context, I discuss psychological and various work-related influences. I begin with my formative thoughts about leadership and then discuss methodological influences. Each aspect is offered as a cameo without extensive explanation as most of these will be given further consideration in the body of the thesis. This section concludes with an introduction to the case study (Chapters 2, 3 & 4), which forms the springboard for the remainder of the thesis.

## **A suspicion of roles**

I have always had a suspicion of the roles people play. I think particularly of figures in positions of authority who seem to rest almost too easily in these roles. I wonder who lurks beneath the role; what does the person think in their quieter

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expectations. The academic world can be seen as a power broker whose demands usually exclude the voice of the researcher. Other areas of power and exclusion will be considered through the research of chapters 1-3.

moments; who are they off their pedestal; what really drives them? Such people operate from an assumption of power in their position and expect respect because they are in their roles. The respect is therefore attached to the position rather than to the person who is in the position. Those I see in leadership roles intrigue me as I wonder how they achieved the positions they find themselves in. When I look at the prime ministers of countries in which I have a vested interest, I see individuals who, whilst they may be intelligent and well meaning, do little to inspire or touch me in their ways of being. They speak in clichés. Their rhetoric is predictable. Their roles are compacted and tightly defined. I see organisational managers in positions of leadership whose influence actually detracts from inspiring a deepened engagement by those around them, rather than offering a positive model to follow.

I believe that it is the capacity for those in positions of leadership to in fact, break out of these positions that make those around them respect the leader deeply. It is when the CEO takes lunch in the common room, speaks as respectfully to each person irrespective of their station, is seen to have time for those on the ground, that their leadership is felt as exemplary. When the Prime Minister appreciates the plight of ordinary people and is able to bring their humanity to the forefront, acting in unpredictable ways that shows their vulnerability and their humanity, that the people themselves feel trusted and valued to do their best.

I have therefore come to realise that the influence of leadership is subtle. It is unrelated to the position held and sometimes the position can detract from a positive influence on the leadership. My interest is to undress the emperor and uncover the nature of the leader, as person.

### **The Dream of Leadership**

Being from South Africa, I have the model of Nelson Mandela, who in his inimitable, humble and unassuming way, deeply touches and engages those around him to bring their best to whatever part they may be playing in the unfolding of South Africa's future. What is it about his way of being in the world that has gained the respect and perhaps even love of so many ordinary and states

people, the world over? Mandela assumed his position as president less out of a will for power than that his seat had been well prepared for him by the people of the country in the years leading up to his inauguration. The quality that shines through his leadership is his continuous capacity to be a compassionate human being, his basic humanity. But his leadership is particularly reflected in his belief in peoples' humanity. He brings unexpected lateral solutions and opportunities to historically impossible impasses. The capacity to create scenarios that hold humanitarian solutions despite all around him believing differently, occurs through him offering his own humanity as guarantor of such a possibility. His humanity thus creates humanity and his leadership inspires leadership in others. He exemplifies the words of Ben Zander, Conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra: 'Never doubt the capacity of the people you lead to accomplish whatever you dream for them' (cited LaBarre 1998). His leadership is thus of a responsive order serving the collective, the people, rather than his personal power.

## **Inspiring work towards understanding leadership**

### **1. Youth leadership in South Africa**

The opportunity to work with multi-cultural youth in the South African context towards the end of the apartheid regime, taught me how essential the nature of context is in order to draw out individual leadership. In South Africa, before Mandela was inaugurated as president and there was any legal infrastructure for racial integration, I was involved with a youth leadership program for people from different racial groups. Leadership, in that context, was broadly defined as a personal determination for action. The students were selected from a group of volunteers on the basis of their predisposition for taking leadership actions. Due to the extreme nature of apartheid, many of the students had never before spoken to similar aged students of a different skin colour. The program provided a variety of meeting environments, including group conversations, which had the safety to speak and express emotions, place to play and do wilderness discovery programs. Many of those communications were extremely painful for the participants as they heard about the experiences, (or what it was like, for) of those in other racial groups. Through the empathic and receptive context, they were able to listen to one another's emotions and stories, and begin to understand and appreciate the

lived experience of the 'other'. I realised then that real change is what happens through the actions and the conversations of ordinary people. The leaders of the country will never be able to achieve the change in consciousness that could be comparable to what happens when ordinary people are offered an environment that can contain 'being different'. I realised that leadership is not about pedestals but that leadership as 'inspiration to action' happens with subtlety. I also learnt about engagement and how conversations can be dangerous and revealing and need careful containment. This containing occurs in the listening and allowing of the other to speak. This contained communicating brings the courage to hear, appreciate and feel the depths of another's pain in the story that is told.

## **2. Rural leadership and change**

During the years 1996-1998, I worked with the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP), a largely content-based leadership development for those already holding a pre-existing role of leadership in an area of rural Australia. My position entailed trialing an exploratory program for developing and integrating the inner or personal aspects of leadership skills. A small group of participants in the program worked together on developing critical reflection skills in application to personal leadership.<sup>17</sup>

I learnt there how difficult it is to reflect honestly on situations; how 'trapped' we are in the ideas and opinions we hold; how in order to change, a process of extrication or and letting go is required. I saw especially how difficult this was for people who are already in positions of leadership; how tightly we/they naturally hold onto the known and accustomed ways of doing things even though we/they can see the need for change.

## **3. Book research and leadership**

In early 1997, I worked on literary and reflective research for the book, *Approaching the Corporate Heart*, by organisational consultant Margot Cairnes (published 1998). Here I learnt a fundamental lesson about leadership: leadership does not reside with individuals but between people.

<sup>17</sup> This pilot program was trialed with a group of six participants in the 1997 ARLP Program, and with Dr David Russell of University of Western Sydney and myself as facilitators and developers of the pilot.



My instruction was to read and summarise my own reflections on chosen organisational topics. Cairnes then added her slant in creating the text for the new book. Whilst I read extensively and learnt a great deal theoretically on topics including leadership, organisational change, and corporate relations, it was in our working relationship that I really understood a new meaning of leadership. Cairnes encouraged me to read and take inspiration from work that I loved. This in turn led to Cairnes finding in my writing the inspiration and the detail that she needed to write quickly and authoritatively. We each had our roles clearly defined and we could work independently and yet mutually supportively. I found my leadership role and realised that within an interdependent relationship, each person has the freedom to operate effectively while at the same time supporting one another's roles.

### **Dialogue Groups**

In this voluntary small group format, there is no facilitator. The method originated and was developed by David Bohm (1990) and has continued to be used in corporate change and leadership work.<sup>18</sup> In a dialogue group, each member of the group is equally responsible and carries the leadership for the whole. There is no formal subject and the group task is the dialogue or finding, as the word *dialogos* means, the meaning running through that particular constellation of people at that particular point of time. The tasks include: speak only when a personalised sense of feeling 'moved' to speak is experienced; honour the last speaker through allowing a space of time between speakers; ask questions with the purpose of real inquiry (rather than to show what you know); listen deeply for meanings that may be beyond the obvious. The dialogue groups in which I participated had between five and ten people who conscientiously reflected on and honed their dialogue skills whilst engaging in dialogue.

When the inner impetus to speak arises, the content is not yet developed. In my own experience I was often interested or surprised by what I heard myself say. This stands in sharp contrast to most group conversations where one attempts to

<sup>18</sup> It is used extensively around the world, with MIT, USA particularly vocal in their application of dialogue in the corporate arenas. Senge (1990) has been in the forefront of advocating its use as a tool of change.

be clever and often speak about what one knows; or inquiring of another in order to show one's knowledge, or even subtly to express power over the other. Over many years of working with dialogue, I began to realise that through this work, I developed a capacity for personal leadership within the group. This was not about being a leader over others, but rather a bringing forth of my own voice, with clarity and intention. This voice was the natural and willing response to a moment that was person and situation sensitive.

### **Development and its meaning**

South Africa, as a developing country, has been subject to the unsustainability of change programs that have been conducted in the name of development. One group of people takes the leadership and attempts to 'help' another group of people. The former operates with an inevitably gross power differential, as they believe they know what is best for the latter. The resultant imposition of ways of operating in agriculture, education, and organisational arenas is frequently inappropriate and therefore unsustainable. It has left me deeply sceptical about how any one group can be enabled to change by another. I question the motivation for the change programs and meaning of the leadership that is assumed.<sup>19</sup> I see a continuing 'colonisation' consciousness operating when programs are conceptualised and applied as a 'top-down' operation.

### **My predisposition to take on the role of the researcher**

During my study towards a Masters of Social Ecology, I conducted various qualitative inquiries in the organisation in which I was employed.<sup>20</sup> The organisation was undergoing cutbacks in government funding and a major reconsideration of direction was underway.<sup>21</sup> At the request of my manager, I conducted research and through a series of interviews questioned each person about their engagement in the workplace. The work resulted in an analysis of the organisation through identifying the underlying tensions experienced by the

<sup>19</sup> Here I refer to the organisational change programs that are instituted either by external agents or by the Human Resources of the organisation concerned.

<sup>20</sup> This Masters degree is an adult education program offered at the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

<sup>21</sup> The organisation is WorkVentures, Maroubra, in Sydney. This organisation offers employment related government funded programs.

employees. But more important than the actual results of the analysis was the gratitude expressed by almost all the participants for the opportunity to speak about and reflect on their work life in the organisation. I saw that the research and especially the conversations themselves were a value adding (VA) process. Soon after, I resigned from this organisation and began my own consultancy. I called it, V A Interventions, with the central intention of using inquiry to form an accurate picture of the underlying or emerging qualities in an organisation. I learnt how the inquiry itself is already intervention.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Case Study – Evaluating Leadership**

When the opportunity to do further fieldwork in the area of organisational change and leadership arose, I was receptive and enthusiastic. The study was to be an evaluation of a leadership program, which would run concurrently with the fieldwork. Given the nature of the researchers and the quality of the leadership program, the research would be conducted with a phenomenological bent with data sourced through the experience of the participants themselves. The research therefore represented the culmination of many of my areas of interest, in particular the evaluation of leadership and change with a methodology that was based in phenomenology. I had little doubt that this was an opportunity for venturing on entirely new ground.

I would like to begin by clarifying the relationship of the research in this case study to my thesis.

- a. The original task for the research (case study) was to evaluate a leadership program.
- b. The desire was to do that via the methods of the phenomenology of leadership.
- c. The client was agreeable.
- d. The actual evaluation was done and concluded in a written report (some of which is here included via the narratives in Chapter 4).

<sup>22</sup> Kurt Lewin, originator of the action research model, recognised that all research is an intervention (Schein 1999). This formed the basis of his action learning model for the learning deeply informs the nature of change. I find it a most profound insight.

- e. The questions that I would subsequently ask were of no interest to the client or company.
- f. I had a belief that the phenomenology of leadership would be made apparent through that research.
- g. I now see that work as serving my current interests.
- h. Perhaps my broader thesis question guided that case study alongside the evaluative study, but now my thesis topic is the foreground and the intention of the case study is in the background.

The thesis therefore uses the case study of a middle-sized industrial plant to further its understanding of the phenomenology of leadership. The study involved the managers and invited staff to consider the nature of their own leadership in the workplace and how this changed over the duration of a leadership-training program for the 25 managers. The intention of this study was to assess and evaluate the impact of the training program on the leadership in the whole organisation, and therefore a cross section of the plant's employees was selected to participate in the study.

Three aspects of the case study and its affects on the phenomenology of leadership will be reviewed: the interviewing event, the narrative data analysis, and the final report delivery.

### **Towards thoughtfulness – an ongoing creative enterprise**

The case study led me to question the possible usefulness of an engagement with the phenomenology of leadership. What kind of knowledge could emerge and what would be the nature of that knowing?

Western methods of inquiry are mostly built on the Kantian notion that the only true source of knowledge comes through sensory experience and that all other knowledge can be considered intellectual knowledge. Peter Reason (1988) expands this restrictive epistemology by asserting that whilst sensual knowing is immediate, so is reflection on that sensory experience. Experiential knowing is the braiding of ongoing observation on ones own or another's experience, alongside reflections to understand, all at the same time. It is a uniquely human capacity to

experience two realities of knowing, observing and reflecting, almost simultaneously. This is the lived experience. The knowing arises out of experience and is different from the intellectual, for it is linked into experience through the reflection on experience. In turn it will also feed back into experience and thereby affect ongoing sensual experience. How we therefore grasp experience and consciously or unconsciously reflect on it, directly affects how we subsequently experience. The cycle of knowing becomes a creative force in our knowing.

Knowing is thus a complex notion continuously developing and being built upon. Points of knowing become like temporary dwelling places of knowing, and these are neither final nor permanent. The act of knowing is more like a process that arises out of action than the finding of an ultimate truth mythically waiting to be known. But the knower and that which is known are not separate; interminably linked, their interaction feeds off one another and gives rise to emergent knowledge. Reason (n.d.) takes a Buddhist perspective in asserting that the universe is organised such that observation and knowing are part and parcel of their very constitution. Knowing is an aspect of creation inseparably linked into the ongoing creative principle. It is not separable from the known but integral to the creative cycle.<sup>23</sup>

In building on an understanding of leadership through reflecting on one's experience of leadership, the reflection process itself becomes fundamental and forming in the apprehension of that experience. The apprehension thereby becomes an action of appreciation through being able to reflect accurately on what is experienced. Whilst the phenomenon (of leadership) cannot be explained with certainty, it can however be approached, with curiosity, as a learner. This is a thoughtful positioning. The awareness that arises through the reflection can lead to the conclusion that in this thoughtfulness, a form of leadership is taking place. It is

<sup>23</sup> This reminds me of the Old Testament where after each act of creation, God reflected on the creation by looking back on it and asserting that it was good. This applied to each aspect of creation other than when the human being was created. My suspicion is that because the capacity for reflection is an inherent aspect of the human being, God could leave this function to be fulfilled by human beings. Other species were not imbued with this faculty, although they are still conscious. Reflection and perhaps even appreciation therefore becomes an inherent aspect of creation.

like a dynamic action leadership.<sup>24</sup> This responsive act of consciousness serves the self for it is also strangely satisfying.

Throughout the thesis, I have braided my ongoing personal reflections as researcher with the theoretical explanations and observations of the research action. These form an inherent part toward the building of an understanding of the experience of leadership. I believe this phenomenological approach to leadership will bring acts of discovery in an imaginative process into how leadership can be seen or understood or known. In asking the question regarding the usefulness of this process, I am not espousing the details of what constitutes something as being useful. I am rather recognising the idea that something is useful when it becomes a resource for further action. It is in the spirit of thoughtfulness that this journey into an engagement with the phenomenology of leadership begins.

### **The following chapters have evolved:**

- 2. Conversations into leadership:** Here the overall story of the research fieldwork and its particular methodological development is told. A focus is given to the interviewing stage where the nature of relationship formation, the experience of the interviews, the quality of language used, and the resulting conversations are interrogated with regard to reporting the phenomenon of leadership.
- 3. The Composite Crucible:** In keeping with leadership as experience and the unique contribution of each interviewee, this chapter examines the system of narrative analysis and designs a method of composite narrative creation which captures the breadth and depth of the data in such a way that individual expression is not lost in the synthesis.
- 4. Tracking the phenomenon of leadership:** The narratives are interrogated for emergent and incidental outcomes over the eighteen-month period. The extent to which the research succeeded in accurately tracking the phenomenology of leadership over the allocated period of time, are put to the test when the final report is dramatically delivered to the client.

<sup>24</sup> This is a play on the words, action learning and leadership; the principle of dynamic and continuous learning and observation cycles, and leadership.

5. **Leadership Dreaming:** The phenomenon of leadership is engaged with in an imaginal way by drawing on psychological, dream work and experiential processes. The relationship of dream work and creativity is examined in the quest to understand the type of leadership that inspires another.
6. **Leadership by the book:** This chapter provides a foil to the previous chapter by reviewing the central tenets and tensions with regard to leadership in the organisational world as expressed by selected published authors and texts.
7. **The longing for change:** Traditional and profound understandings of change are compared and contrasted as the relationship of leadership to change is examined.
8. **Leadership Crystallised:** The opportune occurrence of a leadership event leads to its phenomenological analysis resulting in a constellational approach to the experience of leadership. The possible applications and repercussions of this new approach are examined.
9. **Conclusion:** Whilst this study is not a panacea for organisational change, it has been shown to have significant consequences for organisational research. Its distinctive nature and emergent theory are highlighted.

## Chapter 2

# Conversations into Leadership

### Background

A medium-sized manufacturing plant in Western Australia had recently undergone a major restructuring in which new positions were created and very few jobs were lost. As a result, a leadership strategist was called in to prepare and train the management team to develop their leadership for the newly-created positions.<sup>1</sup> The CEO and leadership strategist decided it could be worthwhile to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership-program in parallel with the training being undertaken.<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation was arranged as a research project that would span the length of the leadership-training (over one and a half years). The intention of the research was to assess the change in the leadership capacity of the managers as well as the improved leadership skills of those throughout the organisation. If the leadership-program achieved its goals, then the leadership capability would cascade through the organisation.

I was part of the small team conducting that research. It was considered that, as leadership is a human attribute, it is best known through personal experience or the experience of another. The data collected would therefore be the direct reports of both those participating in the leadership-training program and those answerable to those participating.

The research design was constructed using phenomenological guidelines to elicit leadership as a living attribute. This was not an interpretative exercise according to particular cultural or social meanings but a living and enlivening reinterpretation where the meaning of leadership as it is experienced in that place

<sup>1</sup> The independent researching of the leadership-program in fact became a precondition of the leadership strategist running the training program for management.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the training program is withheld for confidentiality reasons and will henceforth be referred to as the 'leadership-program'.



can emerge. The clarification of the lived world of experience of the individuals and their sociological grouping was its goal. The research would not be commanded from a distance, nor was it aiming towards an objectivity of results; rather it would be conducted (meanings flow through) in a process that was to be both participatory and facilitatory.

The story of this case study is one:

- of interpersonal conversations and intrapersonal events where attention is given to the phenomenon of relationship between the researchers and the researched
- where the experience of the researcher's bodily sensations and tensions are relevant sources of input
- where a heightened sense of immediacy of experience is trusted to hold great relevance

This case study will directly inform this chapter and the following two chapters. However aspects of its methods and results will be used throughout the thesis.

## **Introduction**

This chapter will discuss and describe the phenomenon of leadership as it manifested and developed through the interviewing stages of the case study. It will be told through the following three interconnected viewpoints:

- The research events.
- The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the research design.
- My experience of the events.

The theoretical underpinnings of method will be braided with descriptions of the research events. The description of my experience is included in italics. It is hoped that this format will enable a holistic and in-depth appreciation of the events described to unfold. This chapter is driven by the question of how in-depth interviews generate the data needed to investigate the phenomenon of leadership?

I begin with further background to how the research came about and the constellation of participants chosen. I then describe the delineation of the evaluation followed by an exploration of the nature of leadership that demands

such an evaluation. The research design in relation to the nature of the inquiry with question creation and researcher preparation follows. The methodological concerns within phenomenology and validity follow, with a discussion of how the various conversational events contain the possibility of providing evidence for the phenomenon of leadership. The chapter ends with the limitations of such organisational research and an introduction to the next chapter.

## **Background to the research**

The CEO of the organisation, through the initiation of the organisational change consultant, commissioned an independent evaluation of the change in leadership over the duration of the leadership-program.<sup>3</sup> The consultant particularly wanted her work evaluated by university academics and the CEO agreed. She approached David Russell, Associate Professor in the School of Social Ecology at the University of Western Sydney, to take responsibility for the research.<sup>4</sup> The research was to be carried out as independent research and the consultant participated in the study as an interviewee.

I was at the time completing a program towards a Masters degree in the School of Social Ecology. I had done a number of research projects and shown interest in qualitative research methods that used conversational and story type processes. My basic ontological and epistemological approaches were in alignment with those of Russell; clearly our academic relationship already had firm foundations. He therefore invited me to participate in this task and I enthusiastically agreed. A third researcher was also brought in to help with the interviewing.<sup>5</sup>

Russell designed the original research proposal. It was then fleshed out and refined by the team of researchers. The phenomenon being investigated was that

<sup>3</sup> For privacy reasons, the name of the consultant is not included. The details of her consulting are not relevant to the research evaluation. It is worthwhile to mention that her consultancy has an existentialist approach and is thus in sympathy with a phenomenological orientation to the research.

<sup>4</sup> That was his position at the time of the research. He is now Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at the University of Western Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> This was Human Resource Consultant, Robin Greaves. At the time, she was considering doing a PhD in Organisational studies, so this work was of interest to her.

of leadership which at the time was seen as the way in which an individual engages in their work.<sup>6</sup> The research would evaluate how the leadership-program affected and impacted on the organisation over its duration. Finding out what was valued, what was less than valued and how this changed over time for the employees would provide a fulcrum to the investigation.

### **Participants ...leaders and followers**

The twenty-four managers of the organisation and the CEO would be participating in the leadership-program. The promise made by the change consultant was that each of them would become 'world class leaders' (the consultant's words). The very concept of leadership implies that they would be leading someone or a group. If the leadership were to be affected, the followers would surely be the first to feel the impact and recognise those changes. Therefore, a further twenty staff, professional and workers, who were answerable to the managers were also included in the study.

The potential for a follower (implying any person answerable to a leader) to be a highly effective assessor of the leadership, is increasingly gaining recognition, according to Hollander (1995). The follower is usually the leader's most attentive audience and experiences the leader's behaviour first-hand. Leadership is less a something that is possessed than an ongoing process involving followers in particular situations.

Author of *Authoritarianism and Leadership*, Sanford wrote:

*There is some justification for regarding the follower as the most crucial factor in any leadership event and for arguing that research directed at the follower will yield a handsome pay-off. Not only is it the follower who accepts or rejects leadership, but also it is the follower who perceives both the leader and the situation and who reacts in terms of what he perceives.*

(1950 cited Hollander 1995 p.73)

<sup>6</sup> This approach to leadership reflects that it is less about a position of power than how one engages with one's position. Leadership manifests with or without a position of power.

Hollander (1992) further states that leadership and followership are an interdependent relationship. With this in mind, those answerable to the leaders would surely provide an accurate reflection of the changes in the leader. In addition to this factor, there was another important reason to include followers in the research design.

## **Cascading leadership**

The promise of the leadership-program was not simply geared towards excellence in leadership, but something termed transformational leadership. Leadership is often considered as a heroic quest, with a person experiencing dramatic conversion from one internal state to another (Cairnes 1998). I do not believe this is what actually happens to people and prefer the idea that transformational leadership is a reference to a highly developed person-centred capacity that can have a positive or inspirational effect on those around them. The meaning of this is a much-debated topic and will be considered in detail in a later chapter. For the current purpose, I assume one of the goals of the leadership-training to be the training of leaders that would inspire leadership in another, namely inspirational leadership. A task of the research in evaluating leadership in the organisation therefore would seek the extent to which leadership, as a result of the leadership-training, could be seen to impact or cascade through the organisation. The capacity for highly person-centred or personal leadership would therefore be sought from all sections of the organisation. The nature of the followers' leadership would provide a measure of the extent to which a changed leadership had penetrated the organisation and its culture. Stubbs (1998, p.318) says, 'This dimension of [inspirational] leadership includes attention to releasing human potential and high levels of interaction and alignment.' Therefore, similar capacities for taking leadership that were sought from the managers would be sought from each group, irrespective of position or status in the organisation. Whilst there was acknowledgement of the influence of the respective roles held in the manufacturing plant, the kind of questions asked and the approach to each conversation were designed to be identical.

The total participants in the study numbered 46 and included:

- The management group, called the ‘top team’ or ‘leadership team’ of the organisation. This group (n=25) including the CEO were the participants in the leadership-program.
- A cross-section of the remainder of the work force, including professional and administrative staff, operators, team leaders; all of whom answer directly to one or more managers (n=20).
- The leadership consultant who conducted the leadership-program.<sup>7</sup>

## **Evaluating leadership**

The question of what ought to be included and what would be better excluded from any evaluation is a source of contention in research fraternities. An evaluation is necessarily fraught for it cannot cover every aspect of what could be included. That reveals its humanness as well as its limitation. This evaluation was no different and decisions based on various assumptions were made at the beginning. This was to be a qualitative study with the assessment of leadership based on people’s experience of themselves. Independent measurements would not be used to analyse the assessment. The evaluation of the leadership was to be based entirely on first person reported information.

A few areas were therefore excluded from the evaluation. Financial loss and gain, always subject to a multitude of factors internal and external to the organisation, was felt best left to the accountants to evaluate.<sup>8</sup> Other possible organisational measurements such as time usage, meeting effectiveness or organisational productivity would not be measured. They would be considered as relevant factors only when they were reported as such, thus reflecting how they were experienced by the employees rather than as an independent time measurement. The evaluation did not therefore attempt to measure or assess any aspect of performance outside of that reported by those individuals participating in the research. This evaluation

<sup>7</sup> I have decided not to include any further reference to these interviews. It is felt that they do not impact on the main thrust of the thesis and because they carry much intrigue, would be a distracting influence.

<sup>8</sup> It was clear that in this multinational organisation, financial loss and gain is subject to forces outside of the internal locus of control. These include the international market prices, political changes, climate, etc.

is unusual in any organisational context where a select number of managers will claim to know what the needs of their reports are or will decide what those needs are to be.<sup>9</sup> In this case, a representative group of the organisation as a whole was selected to participate.<sup>10</sup> No assumptions were made of one group knowing the needs of the other and a full spectrum of voices was used as a basis of the data and essential measures.

The evaluation would run concurrently but separately from the leadership-program. The intention was that the research inquiry or evaluation would not directly affect the ongoing nature of the leadership-program. However, the impact of the research was such that it came to be seen by the participants as part of the experience. Some saw it as enhancing and complementing the program by adding a reflective aspect to their participation. Those not participating in the leadership-program valued the opportunity to voice their understanding of its impact.<sup>11</sup>

## **Leadership – as experience**

What is the nature of leadership here presented that requires such an evaluation to identify its presence? There are three main areas that are useful to examine:

1. Within the paradigm of a rapidly changing world and the well-documented evidence that the leadership of the past decades cannot succeed into the twenty first century, the question of exactly what this new leadership ought to look like has given rise to a wealth of opinions.<sup>12</sup> In the last two decades, most authors describe leadership in relation to a way of being or a way of becoming. The understanding is that in order to make an impact on the world, one has to begin with oneself and the quality of the individual consciousness.

<sup>9</sup> The word, reports is used in relation to ‘direct reports’ or those who report to the managers.

<sup>10</sup> The Human Resource department did the selecting quite randomly; ensuring a cross sectional representation. Letters of invitation were sent and it appears that each person that received the invitation, participated.

<sup>11</sup> Further reflections on the participant’s relationships with the research will be discussed in chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> Wheatley (1992), whose seminal work, *Leadership and the new science*, is broadly referred to, spoke of leadership in relation to advances in metaphysics. She thereby showed how leadership is part of a larger system and therefore needs to be responsive within an organisation. These ideas will be further developed in chapter 8.

Havel (1990), the humane leader of Czechoslovakia, said ‘...without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better’.<sup>13</sup> The defining quality is that this leadership is personally based and comes from within the person. It is a shift away from a leadership that is position- or skills-dependant.

2. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge’s (1990) seminal work, leadership is redefined for a learning organisation, which all organisations need to be if they are to survive in these days of rapid change. This leadership is recognised when a person tells their story. Senge refers to the idea of gifted leadership in relation to the largeness of the story. By largeness I believe he is referring to the extent to which one’s own story is intimately linked with an organisational story. One’s story then becomes the story of one’s engagement with one’s role or position. The same definitions that apply to a person in a major leadership position apply to personal leadership, which may occur outside of a defined position. This capacity for personal leadership is shown in how they carry themselves and their roles in the organisation. In telling the personal leadership story, the extent of their comprehension of the organisational story will also emerge. ‘They were relating the story - the overarching explanation of why they do what they do, how their organisation needs to evolve’ (Senge 1999, p.346). Senge goes on to explain that the story is therefore both personal and universal and brings a depth of meaning to their overall vision. Story is central to a person’s actual ability to lead.
3. An assumption was made that for a fully functioning organisation, leadership manifests itself through each person’s actions and ways of operating irrespective of position or status held. Its presence can be sought in all corners of the organisation.

Therefore, the nature of personal leadership is sought within the quality that each person brings in their engagement with the workplace. The researcher seeks to

<sup>13</sup> Havel, a great humanist, was president of Czechoslovakia and an accomplished playwright. This quotation comes from a remarkable speech he made to the U.S. Congress in 1990.

uncover what holds the person back and what enables their full expression to emerge. Their particular way of expressing leadership will be encouraged for exposition through the interviewing process and their story told through relating their experience.

### **Experience – its telling**

It is necessary to clarify what I mean in the discussion of the ‘experience’ of something. The commonsense view is that experience is an unproblematic concept and reporting it consists of sense data that reflect the objects of the world (Polkinghorne 1989, p.41). This would be tainted by a subjectivity that could hopefully be eliminated using various methodological techniques and consequently assumes that the knower or reporter of the experience is a passive recipient of sensations from the natural world.

However with a phenomenological approach the focus of inquiry is not so much on objects in the world but rather on descriptions of experience as an individual’s perspective. The existence and character of the world are set aside and the research attends to what is present or given in awareness. It therefore does not look for the causes of experience but rather the nature of the awareness or consciousness. The possible reality of an independent outside world is suspended. The resulting experience is the reception of the world through the processes of consciousness that constitute what presents itself in awareness. Meanings as well as concrete objects can be experienced as realities.

In this inquiry into their experience of leadership, each person is asked about how they make sense of their role or the position they hold. Each person’s report is therefore in-creation and being constituted as a combination of their memories and the interview relationship. The particular value of this orientation is to avoid grand narratives or glamorising the perspectives of experience. This research sought an honest and realistic view of how leadership was experienced.



The challenge for the researchers was to find methods to conjure actual experience or lived experience as the source of reference in constituting each person's story.<sup>14</sup> The design of these methods follows.

## **The interview inquiry**

The areas of inquiry were built around five fundamental categories of life and work experience:

- sense of self
- quality of relationships
- openness to change
- sense of personal capacity or responsibility to take action
- enjoyment of work

These five categories were considered broad enough as themes to encompass the spectrum within which the phenomenon of leadership could find expression.<sup>15</sup> They were chosen as themes because they reflected the general content areas of the leadership-program and it seemed that they were of tangible benefit to the day-to-day management of the organisation.<sup>16</sup> The themes are both individual and socially orientated and include capacities relevant to actions taken and how one engages at work. The orientation of the interview remained focused towards the phenomenon of leadership, implying how each person experiences their leadership. The purpose of the five categories was to provide access routes to the larger question of leadership. The questions created for the interviews were crafted through these categories. These can be seen in Appendix A.

<sup>14</sup> It is not that people tell lies about their experience; it is rather that people naturally speak without consciously referring back to experience. This may be speaking from memory or out of the expected rhetoric of that culture, social grouping or place.

<sup>15</sup> These categories are adapted from Cairnes (1992, p.27).

<sup>16</sup> The details of the skills and capacities sought by the leadership-program were never specifically defined.

The interviews invited each person to tell their stories – the psychological (how they see themselves and their capacities), the sociological (how they view the quality of their relationships) and their relationships with their work roles (enjoyment of work, readiness to change, responsibility to take action). The researcher was the learner rather than an expert on leadership. The inquiry process aimed to suspend judgements or assumptions in order to uncover each person's leadership story.

Interviews were carried out at three discrete periods of the leadership-program. These were:

1. before the leadership-program began
2. midway through the leadership-program (after seven months)
3. after the formal conclusion of the leadership-program (after eighteen months)

## **The Interviews and the questioning**

The term semi-structured as applied to the interviews is appropriate. Maximum effort was made to fully engage with the interviewee and not be distracted by having a detailed protocol of set questions demanding specific answers. This style of interviewing allows for both a focus on the experience of the participant as well as a narrative flow. The questions are there as a springboard or for reference as needed. The primary orientation is constantly towards the nature of the interviewees' experience of their working life or their leadership (without naming it such) as an essentially human experience. The research question drives the interview generally more than the prepared questions. This orientation is what distinguishes the method as phenomenological. Van Manen refers to this type of interviewing as 'conversational interviewing' for it serves as an occasion to '*gather lived-experience material*' (1990, p.63).

Each person was interviewed for up to an hour (on average about 50 minutes) at each session. This was tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. The microphone was a flat table type, fairly discrete and the recording equipment was out of sight. Of course, interviewees were aware of the recording and permission from them was always sought. Three researchers carried out the three phases of

the interviews over a period of 3-4 days for each of the phases. Each researcher interviewed up to six people per day. Transcripts of each interview were offered to the participants inviting them to make corrections or add any further details. This option was only minimally used.

## **The design of the questions**

The questions were strategically designed to be inquiring of and unthreatening of a person's position.<sup>17</sup> They were intended to invite a dialogical and complex level of knowledge formation in the ensuing conversation. This was in keeping with the design of the interview which strove to find a mutually-created position in the exploration and agreement of a mutually-created relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

The questions began with phrases like:

- Can you help me understand how...
- I want you to think about...
- I am very keen to know...

As can be seen in Appendix A, three or four questions were designed around each category. The interviews attended to each of the five categories of experience although not necessarily only by using the designed questions. The questions were seen as useful back-up rather than as a methodical working-through of each question. This flexibility enabled the conversation to flow into unexpected places, where leadership may not have been anticipated. The researchers were genuine inquirers into how each person manifested their leadership.

<sup>17</sup> The designing of the questions made use of Fran Peavey's *Strategic Questioning Manual* (n.d.), found at [www.crabgrass.org](http://www.crabgrass.org). Strategic questions are designed to yield new information and open the deeper desires of the heart. They are motion-creating with a focus on what could transpire with active participation in the present and future. They avoid asking 'why' for that forces a defensive position; they avoid questions yielding a 'yes' or 'no' answer for they don't invite depth. Strategic questions are simple direct questions that respectfully challenge and empower the interviewer and the interviewee.

In an interview with Varela, Scharmer (2000) says categorically: ‘We think we know a lot about organisational experience, but the truth is we haven’t found a good method of accessing the situated and living nature of organisational experiences’.<sup>18</sup> Varela agrees and discusses three possible effective methods of accessing first person experience; introspection, which is basically mainstream psychology with its well-developed cognitive sciences, phenomenology and contemplative traditions such as Buddhist practices. Phenomenology was chosen as the most suitable method and the research design used a methodology where yielding the experience of the first person (the interviewee) was of primary importance (Varela 1999). First person methods are particularly effective in serving the subject of leadership because of the nature of the intersubjective value granted through the second person (the researcher). The intersubjective can also be seen in relation to the subjective perceptions of others who are present in one’s world and in relation to insights into oneself. Empathy, considered to be the means through which another person or group become accessible, is the basis for intersubjective understanding (Moustakas 1994, p.37). The validity of the intersubjective communication is insurance for the interpretation of the data yielded.

### **First person methodology**

In this methodology, the content of what is yielded becomes as important as the process of recalling or conceptualising experience. The process itself can determine the subject matter, depth and quality of recall of lived experience and finally, even the preparedness to engage openly and honestly with lived experience. The relational nature between the first person and the researcher (the second person) therefore achieves significance in the recalling of experience. This idea stands in contrast to most research processes that focus entirely on third person data or reported data. Such data is content-orientated and not attached to the subject that initially perceived or experienced the data. This data is usually

<sup>18</sup> These ideas were part of a conversation between Otto Scharmer and Francisco Varela that took place in Paris, January 12, 2000. It was part of a global interview project with 25 eminent thinkers on knowledge and leadership. The project has continued to grow and to date there are over 100 interviews. The URL provided can be used to trace the other interviews on leadership; many of which make interesting reading.

considered by researchers with a more quantitative orientation to have greater validity than first person data. First person methodologies are criticized as giving rise to data that is purely in the realm of private experience and therefore not considered valid or true.

Rorty (1989) presents a strong case that all truths are contingent on the describing activity of a human being. He states that there is little distinction between facts and values and an investigator will always be implicated in the observations. With Varela (1999), I have observed that what is yielded in first person methods is continuously open to intersubjective validation because of the prominence given to the position of the second person. This role has been marginalized in research perspectives and yet it is this second person that can be seen as a mediator who enables or facilitates the first person to locate their subjective experience accurately and profoundly. They provide a 'curious intermediate position' (Varela 1999, p.8) and their role directly affects the nature of the information. It is useful to explore the nature of this role further since the term mediator does not quite capture the quality of the relationship established between the first and second person.

In the heuristic phenomenological model, Moustakas (1994) insists that in order to yield in-depth information, the researcher or second person should be steeped in the same domain of experiences as those being investigated, the first person or interviewee.<sup>19</sup> This is essential when the question being posed is a burning inquiry for the researcher and the research is then a process of discovery into the researcher's own issues.

In this case study however, although I had never worked in the particular environment described by the interviewees, the nature of the experience of the interviewees was eminently human and relational and therefore accessible to my capacity for providing empathy and understanding of their story. I believe I was

<sup>19</sup> Heuristic research methods emphasise the discovery of researching that come when the researcher is emotionally immersed in the phenomenon. Moustakas developed his methods through his own traumatic experience of loneliness. For more emotionally laden topics, I agree with Moustakas. It would be impossible to yield a depth of data unless the researcher felt an emotional connection with the phenomenon.

able to show an appropriate level of understanding in order to yield their trust and confidence to engage in their interview experience. I noticed my sensitivity to when interviewees were not speaking about their personal experience and was able to gently challenge them to bring them back to reveal their own experience.

### **The expertise of the first person**

The inquiry was built on the cognitive and mental events associated with each person's lived experience in the workplace. The pivot of 'what is work/life like for you – as worker/manager – in this organisation?' was the still point of the inquiry around which the entire study would revolve. It would therefore honour what the other brings: their reality as expressed, with its particular depth as represented in their words.

Individuals' assessment of their own situation and particular experience was accepted in good faith; they were considered to have the needed expertise in understanding what transpired in their workplace; they were the experts of their own experience. The evaluation did not aim to produce a neatly-stitched report with explanations for what worked or did not work well; it did not seek closure on a particular assumption; nor did it look to the past for explanations or attempt to project particular hypotheses into the future. The future and the past integrated into the present as this present was experienced for each participant.

There was no presupposition to know beforehand what the issues might be; the inquiry sought to find out what was being energetically felt or what each person knew directly. First hand experience, as the measure of change, would be honoured. Husserl (cited Seifert 1987) stresses the principle 'back to things in themselves' and this would manifest in this study as the encouragement to look again at the things of experience and know them as if for the first time.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Seifert (1987) compares the search for the things in themselves to the story sketched by Plato in the Phaedrus. The souls have a most strenuous climb up to heaven in order to arrive at the intuition of ideas. This is a metaphor for what is considered to be the core of phenomenological philosophy; it reflects the effort that is required to clarify how things are for a person, without the distortion of theory or other deceptions getting in the way of this direct apprehension.

Further, in relation to the subject of leadership, the interviewing methods acknowledged the experience of each person irrespective of the position they held in the organisation. This method of inviting each voice to find its full expression holds the assumption that a fully functioning organisation needs the engagement and leadership of each person to be present.

### **Towards engagement – including the researcher’s**

Approaching these interviews with a simple set of questions or survey questionnaire would have yielded stock answers. The familiarity with daily life and subjective experience is a hurdle that has to be managed and overcome through the interviewing process. Clearly, to yield useful data required particular skills of the researchers. The researchers determined to participate each as a full human being who could actively engage in the flow of the conversation.

The seminal phenomenologist, Heidegger (1962), considered thoughtfulness to mean in caring attunement with the other and Van Manen (1990) believes this quality to characterise phenomenology. The quality of the study depended on the researchers’ personal engagement during every aspect of the research process. Engagement implies being at a very practical level of concern and care for the person who one is listening to at the moment. The personal quality that was sought in the researched needed to be carefully modelled by the researchers.

The efforts of the researchers therefore went especially into the establishment of this framework, the conversation itself. The creation of the conversational process became more central than the details of the actual words or replies spoken. I believe that when an engagement is active and enlivening, the ensuing conversation is trustworthy as a container for one’s emotions and words. What is relayed therein becomes acceptable. Every attempt was therefore made to ensure that responses were self-generated rather than looking for an expected response or stock reply. A breadth of responses was encouraged rather than the researchers seeking any party line. The interviews became a container for complex thinking where judgements were suspended. The openness given allowed and even invited ambiguity and uncertainty to be present.

The quality of relationship created in this kind of conversational process bears similarity to a counselling model within an existentialist phenomenological paradigm. Spinelli (1999) discusses how issues of relationship by far supersede the particular therapeutic technique that may be used. He says that the most important factor for a successful relationship is the opportunity to simply talk to another person. Spinelli (1997, pp.6-7) sees the therapeutic model more as a

*...clarificatory exploration of the client's way of being-in-the-world ... than it is about symptom removal, "ego-strengthening", "rational functioning" and so forth. It seeks to provide a psychic meeting-place which is sufficiently accepting and respectful of the client's existence as it is currently being lived so that it may be disclosed and investigated in an open, non-defensive fashion.*

He discusses the role of the therapist as one who is attendant to this story and who can facilitate this process for a very particular quality of relationship is necessary to empower the client to tell their story.

The goals for relationship in this therapeutic model are similar in intention to the relationship sought in the case study investigating leadership. This therapeutic model is different from many other therapies because it does not seek to pathologize a client rather it is inherently respectful of the client as a full human being. Such a relationship is therefore appealing to the client's leadership. In the case study the researcher also sought to be present (attendant) to the experience of the interviewee. The research tried to put judgements aside and have no assumptions about the nature of the experience of leadership of the other. As researcher I tried to be continuously aware of my approach and carry no preconceptions about the modes of behaviour reported. I consciously sought to bring the interviewee closer to their own experience by modelling this myself and gently challenging the authenticity of their responses.

Whilst this theoretically sounds like a productive meeting ground to create with another, how realistic or possible is it really? This way of being with another is surely vulnerable to the researchers own assumptions and biases. Is it possible to put prejudice aside and what of judgements that may have been present, even if not consciously? In psychological language, this would be similar to projections that a therapist may unconsciously impose on a client.



In a subtle way, the researcher will project their conscious and unconscious ideas or judgements onto the interviewee and this will direct the interview or colour what is said. I believe this is almost inevitable and I would like to discuss some of the methodological controls that were put in place to control for it.

### **Clarification or Deception**

I will begin by highlighting the work of Marcia Salner that describes how vulnerable such first person research processes are to what she calls self-deception. Salner (1999) states emphatically that researchers in qualitative research have to actively guard against this seldom discussed occurrence. She compares self-reflexivity with self-deception as follows: The 'self-reflexive capacity for controlled distance' comes about as a result of the deliberate 'cultivation of a zone of objectivity' within ones subjective experience. This implies that ones own involvement in the portion of the life world being studied studying is acknowledged and deliberately 'played with' in a creative way. Self-deception, on the other hand, results from the lack of development, or temporary failure of this capacity (1999, p.3). Salner sees deception as a form of psychological resistance that is a naturally occurring thought form and more the rule than the exception. It happens because the qualitative researcher is immersed in the everyday world of human interaction. It manifests as blind spots in the researcher's relationship to the data as a direct result of their biased relationship with their subjects. Thus Salner recommends that active steps be taken methodologically to control its impact. It was within the context of the planning and debriefing conversations between the researchers with an ongoing attention to researcher reflexivity, that this protection was implemented.

### **Conversation: between the researchers**

Three researchers worked on each set of interviewing sessions. Whilst Russell led the team, a spirit of mutual cooperation brought a fullness of participation and creative input from each of the researchers. This kind of relationship and the ongoing dialogue between the researchers became central to the effectiveness of the work done.

Initially in arranging the interviews, it was important to ensure that the questions were personally relevant and comprehensible. One of the exercises practised was to ask the questions intended for the interviewees of one another. The depth and breadth of responses that were sought from the interviewee were also sought between the researchers. This valuable exchange enabled an honest engagement between one another to surface as it also challenged and exposed the researchers' understanding of their own leadership.

Prior to each of the three sets of visits to the plant, the three researchers met to plan and rehearse questions and reinforce a common framework for establishing rapport with the interviewees during the interviews. The aim was to ensure that a sufficient degree of commonality and consistency was present across the interviewers. The practice of meeting was also held at the end of each day's interviewing.<sup>21</sup> Assumptions and interpretations from the day were vigorously shared and compared each evening. These conversations became an integral part of an ongoing clarification process, assisting with clearing judgements and maintaining the researchers' renewed openness to the interviews.

### **The challenge of deception**

Were I to have done these interviews without the involvement of other researchers, my immersion in the process would have been such that self-deception would have been very difficult to avoid. This was because the nature of the work was both reflexive and personally demanding and the boundaries between researcher and project were continuously in conscious creation.

A further challenge was that the leadership-program itself frequently reached critical points which became puzzling for the participants and therefore for the researchers.<sup>22</sup> It was sometimes a struggle to make sense of the entanglement of events. Speaking through the issues with the other researchers helped to separate

<sup>21</sup> This research took place at a venue in Western Australia far from each of our residences in Sydney. This allowed the opportunity to extend our discussions into the evenings, for interviewing took three to four days.

<sup>22</sup> The leadership-program contained levels of intrigue that could be the subject of a whole book. An aspect of the interviews included managers trying to make sense of things that transpired within and through the training.

the researchers' personal projections from what seemed to belong to the organisation or the particular group being represented. This became like a sense-making process and helped guard against what may be considered purely subjective perceptions and assumptions. In retrospect it was less about making meaning than it was about actually extricating one's identity from the issues presented.

The conversations between the researchers held in the evenings after the day of interviewing were often emotional and lively, and helped to illuminate the assumptions, conclusions, judgements or beliefs that were built through the day. They were significant in protecting the continued reflexivity; an inherent and significant aspect of the often complex and compassionate relationship between researcher and interviewee. When the issues were identified and consciously noted, they could be shelved or in phenomenological terminology, bracketed out.

## **Phenomenology and bracketing**

Phenomenology has already been described as a clarification of the life world.<sup>23</sup> The method of phenomenology offers a variety of techniques to enable this clarification and one of these is by avoiding that which stands in the way of a direct apprehension of experience. Assumptions, judgements, beliefs and prejudices are mental processes that either consciously or unconsciously prevent the direct perception of the experience. The raising of these mental processes so that they are set aside can be seen as bracketing. This enables a process of standing back from one's usual way of seeing or conceiving the world and attempting to access or intuit the phenomenon more directly.

Husserl (1931) suggests a particular and conscious attitude is required in order to avoid being imprisoned by everyday judgements. The more natural process is to repeat and speak from these learned operations. Making the judgements explicit requires an effort that does not happen naturally.

<sup>23</sup> This was explained in the introduction to the thesis.

Such an effort means the judgements can consciously be laid aside and the particular everyday experience can then be looked at afresh.<sup>24</sup>

Bracketing took place in a number of ways. Before each interview, the researchers took the time to check for assumptions or judgements within themselves. The researcher conversations were a form of bracketing whereby assumptions and beliefs could be noticed and shelved. During the interviews, the researcher challenged the interviewee to shift from judgements or explanations of their experience and aim for an authentic or original description of their own experience. This would transpire through the use of probing questions like: 'How is this for you?' or 'How do you experience this?' I believe these processes of getting data directly from the interviewee's experience further contributed towards mitigating possible self-deception in the researcher and thereby validating the findings.<sup>25</sup>

### **A descriptive conversation – within the researcher**

I continue now with an in-depth or 'rich' description, as detailed by Geertz (1973, 2004), of my own experience as an interviewer.<sup>26</sup> This description, a reflexive exercise, is a way of clarifying the quality of my engagement in the interview process. It will present the story of what happened in its detail and also organise it such that the interpretative and analytic levels emerge. Geertz, anthropologist and ethnographer, describes the importance of such a description as follows:

*The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has to do with their capacity to convince us that what they say is as a result of their having actually penetrated (of if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly 'been there.' And that, persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where writing comes in...*

Geertz (2004, p.236)

<sup>24</sup>This process is very similar to that of a suspension, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

<sup>25</sup> Validity is a topic that will be reviewed at the end of Chapter 4. In this case, the intersubjective nature of the conversations helped clear emotional build-up, prejudiced ideas or issues that arose.

<sup>26</sup> Rich description as a term has been popularised by Geertz who in turn borrowed it from the famous ethnographic work of Bronislaw Malinowski (1961 cited Geertz 1973).

The description is used as an attempt to capture my lived experience in the written word. As Van Manen (1990, p.36) describes:

*Lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence - in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.*

The narrative shows rather than tells the story of the meaning I make as I inwardly position myself in preparing for this work. It shows the quality of my engagement, reflects the nature of the bracketing and the creation of the intersubjective meeting. It is typical of my experience for all the interviews and describes with some depth what it is like to be me, as interviewer.

The narrative is also my dialogue with the reader, for my hope is that this writing will give the reader a thorough sense of my experience. The level of being in touch that I hope to connect with the reader is what I wished to evoke in the interviewee in relation to their reporting on the lived sense of their experience. The lived experience can be seen as a quality of inspiration as it moves from one person to another.<sup>27</sup> In retrospect, I believe the portrayal of my process is a reflection of my leadership.

## **Description of my experience as interviewer**

*I have set up the little room and recording equipment. I look around. The possibilities for improving the space are limited. I remove the extra chairs, tidy the space, empty the garbage and place the interviewing chairs in the least threatening positions to establish equality. I clean the board and hide the long wires of the recorder. The lights are turned low and I sit down quietly to wait. I am anxious and a little uneasy. I breathe deeply into my belly. I scan my body and locate sources of tension. I notice the nature of my inner dialogue. I try and remove distractions and personal issues. I write down a few thoughts that arise. Eventually, the interviewee enters.*

*I greet them welcomingly and try and see them in all their fullness and complexity. After a while, I feel myself relaxing and this is somehow mirrored in the other. I continuously remember and consider my own bodily sensations.*

<sup>27</sup> In a later chapter, I refer to this phenomenon of inspiration being passed around as similar to the concept of a gift as discussed by Hyde (1999).

*I use these as signals to be responded to. When I feel a knot in my belly I trust its wisdom and look for something which is yet underlying; something that is not being said; that is somehow present but not yet apparent.*

*With each person, I try to engage with their sense of their experience. I try to find a unique meeting place; each according to their character; with their world of involvement and issues. Some are humorous others stay serious and intense. I sometimes gently challenge them to elicit their own responses and feelings, independently from what their peers may be saying. I prod a little, sometimes inviting scenarios that may evoke a definiteness of response. I do this by taking clues from the feeling of the energetic expression rather than by using the words and their meanings. Intimate details of personal relationship are often shared as these are thought to impact on their experience in the workplace. I feel my challenge is to encourage responses that emerge from this moment of meeting; to separate what is spoken here from the tired rhetoric of the usual phrases; to bring in a conscious bodily memory and to remember again, in a present and fresh way, the nature of their experience of themselves in the workplace.*

*Of course, I do not actually refer to bodily consciousness with the interviewee. I seek it through deepening of the questions; challenging the source of what is expressed ('Who else holds this view?'); bringing in the present and the bodily sensation by finding their feeling or sense about it ('How is that for you?'); embracing the living memory (Can you give me an example of what you've described' or 'Can you tell me about a time when that happened?').*

*I maintain an active level of listening for a hint or gesture that signals there is something below the surface or trying to plumb what is it that is not being said.' These cues seem to offer a wellspring of significant experience. I feel the process works well when highly educated and coherent adults (mostly men) grapple for the words to express their feelings, repeat themselves, or I feel their uncertainty. I try and stay in that uncomfortable place with them, experiencing my own struggle against my inclination to rescue and escape the moment by asking another question. Sometimes I manage and other times I protect the other from the discomfort. These difficult moments, when sustained seem to lead to a deepening of their understanding – often for the first time. Perhaps an insight escapes as they seem to really 'look again', as Husserl would say.*

*Our relationship deepens as trust between us builds with each new round of interviews (three rounds of interviews over a period of a year and a half). We express pleasure in seeing each other again. We enthusiastically refer back to what was spoken about in the last round and relate what has happened since. Although we know we are not friends and that what takes place is simply a unique event contained by time and four walls, the initial meeting with one another again feels like a catch- up opportunity between friends.*

*Some of the workers invite me to visit their workplaces and I am shown an achievement or particular design feature. A few people take me on a guided tour of the entire plant. I felt the mutuality of relationship grow because of my*

*interest in what they do. These trips give me an opportunity to learn from them and see them proudly placed on their own ground. It also serves to stir my feeling for the manufacturing plant in its complexity. In time, I begin to see the beauty of the place and on each return notice the different colours and the smells of the gas emissions, feeling pleasure in my growing knowledge and understanding of the workings of the manufacturing plant.*

## **Towards experience and only experience**

As researchers, the challenge was to find out how leadership was being experienced by the individual in front of us. A very broad working definition of leadership was taken as ‘a person’s readiness for taking action’. The information sought was from that person individually with their particular experience and capacities and their preparedness to open themselves and show that readiness within the interview. Hearing the frameworks of meaning that were habitual or formed in the past was not to wrong the other. It is rather that that would not indicate their leadership. My interest was in the words, ideas and feelings being formed freshly within our conversational relationship, knowing that these are sourced in their actual experience. Crotty (1996, p.275) explains this phenomenon thus:

*It is about putting that meaning system in obeisance. Instead of inviting us to explore our everyday meanings as they stand, it calls upon us to lay them aside for the moment and to open ourselves to phenomena in their stark immediacy to see what emerges for us.*

Crotty (1996) explains that the focus in a phenomenological inquiry should be on the description of the experience itself rather than what the person has made of the experience. Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests that a direct description of experience is without explanation or interpretation and this description becomes the new given, the data sought.

The word, data, is strange within this context. It is strongly reminiscent of quantitative studies where the data is considered objective, third person and somehow impersonal and detached. The research for this case study is first person-based and aiming towards reproducing a lived quality that transpires within relationship. Van Manen (1990) discusses an interesting phenomenological justification for using this word, data, outside of the obvious sense in which one is

collecting or gathering the stuff of human science, as the scientist does with data. Originally the word datum means something given or granted and in a lived sense, experience is given in everyday life. The word phenomena means 'that which appears to one': this significant aspect of the phenomenological process implies that the atmosphere created within the conversation needs to invite access to these inner living dimensions (Van Manen 1990, p.53). This level of disclosure, which is usually reserved for only the most intimate of situations, requires a most precise method of access. The data sought is therefore that which arises freshly from the interviewee as a lived experience; it is not identical to the actual experience it describes, but emerges from the re-engagement (during the interview) with that experience.<sup>28</sup>

### **The engagement of the interview**

The interpersonal engagement has resulted in the phenomenological interview often being conceptualised as a discourse or conversation (Mishler 1986). Kvale (1996, 2003) who has written about the nature of the interview in both the psychoanalytic and phenomenological traditions considers the interview to be under-utilized as a powerful site where knowledge is produced. He states that the focus in the interview is on the life-world or the experience of the interviewee and is theme-oriented rather than person-oriented. The interview seeks to describe or understand the central themes of the experience being investigated (in this case, leadership) and to appreciate how they, the interviewees, are experiencing themselves or the nature of their experience. It does not seek explanations for why their experience is such. The interview aims towards descriptions that are precise in meaning. The maintaining of the focus on non-theoretical explanations or descriptions means that the researcher must remain open to the presence of the new and unexpected. This also implies that many questions are shaped in the moment with regard to situations described by the interviewee.

<sup>28</sup> I recognise that my attempt to clearly explain this idea of lived experience within the interview situation is a little clumsy. It appears to me that it is a complex notion for which the appropriate vocabulary has not yet been developed.



The relationship formed within such a conversational process becomes integral to the nature of the data gleaned. An integral aspect of the relationship was that highly effective and healthy individuals were being challenged to develop their leadership potential within the organisation. Whilst these conversations were likely to venture into areas that were unusual and might therefore be uncomfortable, there was no desire on the part of the researchers to avoid ideas that were awkward; on the contrary, these were sought.

Indeed, as Crotty (1998) suggests, when one steps out of the routine and well-formed conceptualisations, words may seem to elude one and descriptions may become incoherent or fragmentary; metaphor may be needed to break from conventional ways of seeing and capture the experience described.

### **Validity and coercion**

Participation in the research was by invitation and therefore voluntary. The reality of the voluntary nature of attendance can be challenged on the basis that being part of a large organisation can result in unspoken and subtle exertion of pressures. It was unclear to the researchers how much pressure was felt on those who agreed to participate. However, an interesting gauge to congenial participation was the change in numbers from the first round of interviews to the second and third rounds. The differences were based only on relocation or unavailability on the day. A few people made the effort of coming to the manufacturing plant when they were off duty; many rearranged their schedules in order to accommodate the interviews. This seemed to imply that they had enjoyed the process and were participating graciously. Because the subject was leadership, this demonstration of voluntary engagement was a factor that enhanced the reliability of the data.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> I base this idea on the corollary of that statement. If there was coercion to attend the interviews, then the reliability of the data surely diminishes.

## **Conversational interviewing**

As has been discussed, the nature of the interviews became more like a conversation between two people than a formal interview. Whilst a conversation implies an equality of inquiry and advocacy between all participants, these interviews involved a greater tendency by the researcher to inquire, with the interviewee doing more of the advocacy. Van Manen (1990) coined the term 'conversational interview' to describe the quality of interview appropriate for hermeneutic phenomenological human science data gathering. This practice uses the central research question (the phenomenon of leadership) rather than the prepared questions to direct the interview. The questions are secondary to the central driver, which was to capture people's experience of their working life. The phenomenon of leadership therefore, can be seen as determining the direction of the interview, with the questions used as springboards.

In practice, the above ideas translate into the attempt in the interview of reaching into the reality of 'What is it really like for you in your work'? The essence of the question is the opening up of the questioner such that they keep their subject's interest (Gadamer 1998). To question something deeply is to delve into the question so that one is animated and enlivened through the enquiry. In the investigating of the nature of the interviewee's engagement in the workplace, I attempted to model a way of engaging that I hoped to stimulate in the other. With my interest genuinely invigorated by the central notion of leadership as experience, I believe I thereby brought my own leadership into the interview. It appeared through the willingness of the interviewee that this way enabled that same quality in the other to surface.

A frequently expressed comment by the participants was how rare it was to be asked, and then have one's reply listened to in a mindful way, was noted as even more unusual. The interviewees appeared to embrace the opportunity to inform of their work life at the manufacturing plant. Some emphasized their need for confidentiality.

With that reassurance, it was often difficult to stop the interviews after an hour had passed. Certainly, this engagement transpired after an initial warm-up period; thereafter, people appeared to deeply enjoy the process of telling their stories.

### **Remembering experience**

I would like briefly to discuss the role of body and imagination in the remembering of experience and telling of stories. Poet and author Robert Bly (1988) once said that if you want to know about a person's life, ask their bodies. Every sensation and emotion in each moment is registered and imprinted on our bodies. The body is the centre of all experiencing.

Husserl greatly valued the place of the body as the vehicle of all experiencing (cited Kockelman 1967). Whilst he spoke of the life-world as being the intertwined web of experience, he considered consciousness to be of a transcendental nature and apart from the body. Merleau-Ponty (1962) disengaged from this traditional phenomenology in identifying perception as being akin to apprehension, which encompasses all the senses. Perception thereby becomes a conscious act and consciousness is relocated in the bodily experience. The act of remembering therefore calls for the re-story-ing of the experience. Remembering one's experience, though it is of the past, brings that memory of the experience into the present and into the interviewing process. The description of events and conditions, remembered and recreated within the interview, is imaginative in the reaching towards or even grappling towards describing it. Things may be characterised anew, become re-enacted; memory of the feelings and emotions that have been experienced on the bodily level are relived in the moment.

The imagination of the researcher seems to mix with that of the interviewee as both are engaged in the description and are reaching towards a deepening dialogue, which can further explore and make meaning. It is therefore in the dialogue itself that the discovery, or maybe un-covering, is made possible. With leadership as the phenomenon sought, the stories that were revealed carried the responses to the emergent research questions.

## **Reflections on the methodology**

There are important ways in which the methodology shown in this study is aligned with the belief systems, aesthetics and perhaps even epistemological and ontological points of view of the researchers. Each researcher has a very person-centred perspective where respect for the individual experience is paramount. The opportunity to approach this study in a neutral way, where each participant in the study assumes equal importance, enabled the focus to be on the individual voice and individual leadership. Because the research did not have to be answerable to either the consultant or CEO, the researchers could maintain a continuous and unswerving spotlight on the individuals' experience and only their experience. This trust in the individual as the source of data, as opposed to seeking other possibly more objective measures, had a powerful impact on the researchers. There were two repercussions: firstly, the researchers developed care and interest in each individual and therefore sought to be loyal to that by ensuring accuracy of representation; secondly, the alignment with the personal values of the researchers resulted in a level of passion developing for this research. Van Manen (1997) explains that the phenomenon being researched directly impacts on the researchers. It appeared that the study was suffused with leadership qualities which enabled each of the researchers to apply themselves whole-heartedly to the task at hand. One can conclude that the researchers developed a greater sense of their own leadership because of the particular methodology chosen.

## **Towards concluding**

I have described and analysed how a phenomenological approach to interviewing has the potential to access the experience of leadership. Before ending this chapter, I would like to mention some of the limitations of this part of the research process. These will simply be stated without explanation, justification or recommendations for change. I maintain that each study has its own particular needs and these have to be individually assessed and weighed against available resources. I will also allude to my experience of the yet unformed nature of the overall research methodology.

### **Limitations of this research**

- a. The interviews were a time-consuming task. It required three interviewers and a total of 135 hours (45 interviewees x 3 visits) of interviewing to collect the data.
- b. The interviewing was dependant on the capacity of the researcher to understand the phenomenon and the phenomenological approach. This is a subtle discipline which seems simpler than it is. It requires the ability to relate effectively to each individual, facilitate the telling of their stories without judgement, yet with continued interest and curiosity. I consider this type of interviewing to benefit from the researcher having a psychotherapeutic or counselling background.
- c. This research depends on the capacity of the respondent to reflect on their experiences and capture their experience through language. There could have been language difficulties where participants spoke English as a second language. This type of interviewing also favours those who are more verbal.

### **The unfolding methodology story**

At the time of doing the interviews, the process of analysing the data had not yet been established. There was an interesting play of events as it appeared that the research methodology was yet another victim of the continuous emphasis on experience. This certainly goes against common research sense where the research design, including the means of data analysis, is completed in anticipation of the fieldwork beginning (Higgs 1998, Lawler 1998). However, this was not a part of the initial research design and the emphasis during the interviewing stages was only on the engagement with the interviews.

This was a source of tension for me at the time of the interviews. I was concerned that the analysis stage may remain incomplete because aspects of data would not be fully accounted for. It took great personal effort on my part to put this concern aside and simply focus on and trust in the unfolding process of the interviewing. There are researchers who value this approach. Willis (2001) argues that deciding what one is looking for can cloud how one looks at or for something. He makes a case for the attentive mind that is deliberately open to the unfolding research and that consciously brackets out assumptions. The phenomenon sought is consequently made apparent.

In retrospect, I appreciate the wisdom of this way of operating. It is certainly consistent with the methodological intentions of a phenomenological framework. I believe this approach enabled a greater openness within the conversations for the communication was not clouded by frames of reference such as responses fitting into themes or categories of experience. The researcher was completely present to the emergent conversation. The self-inquiry and the dialogue aim to discover the underlying meanings of important human experiences. It will be seen that this engagement between researcher and researched enabled the emergence of data that would contain the ingredients for an auspicious analysis. This will be revealed in the narrative analysis sections in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Composite Crucible**

#### **Background**

The interviews are complete. It is time to begin the transition into data analysis. The choice of an appropriate methodology must be considered in relation to the goals of the research and the phenomenon of leadership. The desire for the research was to find a way to capture the leadership of the whole and yet ensure that the complexity and the breadth of each individual expression would remain present as an aspect of the whole. Leadership by its nature is an individualistic enterprise and yet it implies a followership and the presence of a collective. Indeed leadership owes its very existence to the collective. In considering the nature of the leadership within the group, it is necessary to peer through the lens of each individual within that group, for each person reflects the quality of the leadership of the whole. At the same time the attempt to capture the quality of the leadership of the group through the leadership of each individual, is perplexing because of the complexity of the relationship of each individual with the group.

#### **Introduction**

The engagement of the researcher has been fundamental to achieving the sense of each individual through the interviews. This same researcher engagement in the data is seen as essential for affecting the shift from the many individual reports to capturing a sense of leadership present in the whole organisation. This chapter will show the construction of a composite narrative.<sup>1</sup> This new and coherent voice captures the sum and breadth of the individuals of which it is composed, through their language usage and expressions. Its creation is a higher order emergence that eschews simplification. Its particular value is to generate a story that plausibly mirrors what has eventuated in that organisation over time.

<sup>1</sup> The idea of a composite narrative as a reflection of a number of narratives is original and was created for this case study.

The generating of the composite narrative begins with the individual report. The researcher brings a particular sensitivity to what has been revealed in the transcript in order to capture the details and flavour of what has been experienced by that individual. In the strictest sense, the transcripts in their original form are not narratives. They are a compilation of a series of experiences told to the researcher during the course of the interviews. These could be made into a narrative by a process of finding the thread underlying these experiences and then establishing a beginning, middle and end of the particular story (Czarniawska 1998; Polkinghorne 1988). However, with the interest in this research on the organisational leadership, the narrative thread will be created through the combination of numbers of transcripts.

The question asked through this chapter is: How is it possible to analyse and synthesise data such that individual expression is not lost in a melting pot with the most commonly held views?

## **The individual and the whole**

Retaining individual expression remained foremost in the search for an appropriate methodological approach to the data analysis. Each transcript is a new story and also part of a grander organisational narrative. Maintaining the connection of leadership with each story enables faithfulness to the complexity of the spectrum of participants in the organisation, to be sustained. Like a hermeneutic circle, the meaning that one finds in the individual narrative will certainly have some indication of what appears in the whole or collective.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in capturing the whole, individual voices should be evident. However, in order to enable the whole or collective organisational leadership narrative to be evident, it is necessary to engage with individual narrative using a particular imagination that has an eye open for a sense of the whole. In studying an organisation, the significance of the individual narrative is surely the way in which each voice reflects or offers some aspect of the collective.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of the hermeneutic circle was first recognised by Friedrich Ast in the eighteenth century and then developed by Schleiermacher in a program for general hermeneutics as the art of understanding. The phenomenologist, Heidegger, has further developed the application of the hermeneutic circle (Bortoft 1996).



Bortoft (1996, p.13) refers to each part as being a special 'presencing' of the whole.<sup>3</sup> Each individual in a collective represents a point of reference. The whole imparts itself through each one of these individuals; this occurs not because the total is the sum of the parts, but rather because each individual reflects an aspect of the whole. If the whole is present in each individual, how does one recognise this presence? Then, how does one use these manifestations to reflect a sense of the whole group?

### **Towards expressive meanings: the individual**

The interviews were directed to encourage each individual's descriptions of their experience, as these were re-created during the interview. This discussion intentionally discouraged routine responses, which might reflect the opinions of the group or well-versed rhetoric, referred to as tribal language. The interviews therefore sought definite and original expressions of that individual's experience. This is a complex notion and yet central to a phenomenological investigation. I therefore provide further explanatory details of the differences inherent in these modes of expression by referring to the work of Ursula Le Guin (1992, pp147-160) on different tongues.

### **The three tongues**

In the Bryn Mawr commencement address, Le Guin differentiates between three common modes of expression or what she calls tongues. The first is the Father tongue, language spoken from above, the language of social power. It manifests more as a mode of lecturing than of simply speaking itself. It is the language of thought and speaks objectively. It has authority and is a distancing tongue, although this can be unintentional. Success and achievement are very important and these are measured and meaningful. This expression type is often directed with no answers expected, like a one-way speaking. It is often divisive in relation to dominant/submissive, man/woman, and man/nature. Whilst it is called the father tongue, the metaphor does not necessarily extend to fathers speaking to

<sup>3</sup> Ideas concerning the nature of the parts and wholes, and the presence of the part in the whole and the whole in the part, are finely discussed by Bortoft (1996). He also compares Goethe's philosophy of wholes and parts with that of Heidegger's slightly different perspective.

their children. It is more of an archetypal male dominant voice. It manifests in politicians' speech and academic writing. It was evident in the speech of the educated men at the industrial plant when they spoke of their knowledge of the plant and what they believed; when they were definite and uncompromising; when they knew what other staff groups thought and wanted. This style rolls easily off their tongues, with confidence and a slightly disdainful tone, and includes the assumption of power and expertise. It is condescending of the second tongue that Le Guin refers to: the mother tongue.

This is the language of the other, the interior. It is primitive, banal, and repetitive, like housework. It is also vulgar, colloquial, ordinary and conversational. Its power is binding and uniting. Experience is offered as truth. This language is intuitive and feels its way towards things rather than claiming something. It is empowering and trustful. It is also vulnerable and violable. It includes examples like:

*John have you got your umbrella? I think it's going to rain. Can you come play with me? If I told you once, I told you a hundred times. Oh what am I going to do? So I said to her I said if he thinks she's going to stand for that. I love you. I hate you. Tell me what they said, There, there don't cry. Go to sleep now.*

It is a language of relationship, of intimacy, of assumed relatedness. It was spoken by the men at the manufacturing plant when they complained about their victim status; when they wished that things would get better; when they could not understand how they were possibly treated in particular ways; when they complained about the other group simply not understanding what is needed.

The third language LeGuin refers to as native tongue. This is the unlearned language. It is the marriage of public discourse and private experience. As dance is the body moving as art, the native tongue is learned as an art form directly expressing experience. It is the wedding of the father and the mother tongues and represents the conjoining of alienated consciousness and undifferentiated engagement.

Le Guin (1992, p.159) expresses it so well that I quote her demonstration of native tongue:

*Now this is what I want: I want to hear your judgments. I am sick of the silence of women. I want to hear you speaking all the languages, offering your experience as your truth, as human truth, talking about working, about making, about unmaking, about eating, about cooking, about feeding, about taking in seed and giving out life, about killing, about feeling, about thinking; about what women do; about what men do; about war, about peace; about who presses the buttons and what buttons get pressed and whether pressing buttons is in the long run a fit occupation for human beings. There's a lot of things I want to hear you talk about.*

### **Towards the native tongue**

This is the quality of language that I sought in the analysis of the transcripts. Emotions and feelings are not denied and the energy of the communication is directed towards an object. It is the direct reporting from experience. Within this level of assertiveness, individuality is expressed. The individual and their thrust is clearly felt when they speak of things that actually matter to them. They are not trying to please their colleagues or tiptoe around the management; they express themselves directly from their own experience.

It is noteworthy that most of the interviewees were male and in roles of senior management. Most were highly educated and extremely articulate. This meant that the barriers to expressing themselves directly from experience was cultivated in their education. They were taught to hide behind the masks of socialisation cover over natural or spontaneous expressions. They also had great concern for peer opinion. The father tongue was the one that came forth most naturally in the conversation. It required particular effort on the part of the interviewees to appeal to modes of expression that were self-authored.

Van Manen (1990) suggests that an important challenge is to create phenomenological texts that resonate within the reader. In working with the individual transcripts, I sought phrases that reverberated within me as reader. Selection was often without a known reason other than an intuitive sense of connection. Intuition is a key concept here and a validated faculty of knowing within phenomenological methodology. Moustakas (1994, p.32) says that

‘intuition is the beginning place in deriving knowledge of human experience, free of everyday sense impressions and the natural attitude’. However, it is important to note that this resonance, whilst intuitive, was based in a kind of knowing that was at this stage also mostly intuitive. I had already been exposed to a full spectrum of interviews, spending three separate occasions getting to know the interviewees and their work environments. Though I had not consciously analysed the details of the environment, the sense of the whole organisation was intuitively evident to me. It had been cultivated through hearing the range of narratives and meeting the interviewees. Lauer, explaining Husserl’s ideas, says that intuition ‘is the presence to consciousness of an essence, with all that that implies by way of necessity and universal validity’(Lauer 1967, p.153). It is as though my sense of the essence of the organisation as a whole was already developed and therefore my intuition in reading the transcripts was not naïve but cultivated. I therefore already had a sense of the organisation in the individual transcripts.

Metaphorically, this is like the warming up of a crucible. As researcher, I was readied, alert and receptive to the meanings and intentions of the individual expressions.

The following examples are offered as illustrations from this study of what was tracked as expressive language within the native tongue category.

- ‘It’s a good place to work’
- ‘We hear rumours... it makes me feel uncomfortable’
- ‘I think ... my disappointment is that ....’

These are not definitive examples of what was sought because expression is usually context-related and only recognisable as emerging from what has previously been said. More extensive examples of selections made from the narratives are included later in the chapter. Details of the selecting process are explained after the following description of my experience as researcher, working with the transcripts. The purpose of this initial immersion in the texts is to locate the expressive phrases, the native tongue.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Immersion is the term used in phenomenological analysis to describe the quality of engagement with the data.

## Engaging in the texts

The work of engaging with the data begins with a very particular frame of mind. I quietly focus and ready myself in such a way as to exclude all extraneous influences. I try and find a meditative state of inner quietness and presence. I put aside all external influences so that I can engage with the data in an immediate way. I also intentionally release thoughts about what I will be doing with the data and how the report will be structured. I want to open myself to receive from the data. I am aware of how data can be selectively captured, based on how it will be used. (I sometimes wish I was doing it that way – it would be so much easier!) My intention now is simply to receive the depth of what each person brings. I resolve to rely on my body's receptivity and wisdom for what is important.

*I notice the name, the position, and the area of work of the person whose narrative I am about to read. I thereby also know who works alongside, who is hierarchically above and who may be below in the web of work relations. This person is thereby conceptualised in the manufacturing plant context. I know a little of where their concerns may be and I believe this will help alert me to the depth that may be present in their words. I may even remember the individual. I may remember the quality of their being and of their voice and even nuances of expressions and attitudes. I have a sense of anticipation with this information. It seems to increase my anticipation. All this is noticed and noted, and then this information is put aside.*

*As I begin to read, I try and simply listen to get a feeling for and an insight into what is being expressed.<sup>5</sup> I receive the stories and feel for what might be below the surface; what is trying to be said; what is perhaps not being said. I locate those phrases or sentences that speak to me as researcher. Perhaps they carry an energetic quality; an emotion; an expressive metaphor; a point of confusion. Sometimes I notice a struggle with language; a trying to say something; a repetition; a longing for something. I highlight these phrases that seem to carry energy. They seem to have a direction; to be 'going somewhere', although I am not always sure where that may be. This longing quality is not obvious and seems to lie just below the words. I do not try to understand or interpret what was said or even why I chose this piece. These phrases seem to be accompanied by a bodily impulse (mine or maybe theirs, I'm not sure where it originated). This may be a tightening up in my body or it may be breathing out or a breath releasing sensation like a sigh.*

<sup>5</sup> Denzin (1998) refers to an unfolding that occurs during the analysis whilst Goodfellow (1998, p.105) refers to an 'empathic attunement' to the situation being exposed.

<sup>6</sup> The process of receptivity reflects the need to not impose a frame in reading but to retain a simple openness to what is unfolding in the data

<sup>7</sup>

*I experience this as a highly personal process and remind myself to trust that. I believe that my engagement and authenticity with the task will provide validity for what is found.*<sup>8</sup>

When I have finished reading each person's text, I write spontaneously for a few minutes. This is an immediate sensing of what I am left with from that person's story. I note what qualities seemed to predominate. Then I turn to the next text and begin again. This continues over a few days, until I have completed the 20 or so texts from which I will compile the composite.

### **Selections of text**

Kurt Lewin (1952 cited Marrow 1969), in his field theory, suggests that the power of underlying forces and needs determine behaviour in any field of interaction, like an organisation. He spoke of these forces as being vectors in a field of action. Individuals participate in a space that is constructed under the influence of vectors; energetic forces with direction. Individual behaviours and group interdependence are often manifestations of the needs and drives of the whole group. These vectors, or energetic phrases that seemed to have a direction, were sought through engaging in the texts.

The following selections are taken from four of the original transcripts from the staff group. Each is a selection from a much longer interview and describes an aspect of a person's work experience. The individualistic quality of each person's particular drives and longings are apparent. My intention is not to show their political or social agendas, but rather reveal a part of the whole interview that expresses a sense of their leadership as a function of their engagement in their work environment. In particular, their relationship with the management will be noticed as the dominant aspect of their experience of their personal leadership.

<sup>8</sup> I remember reading this but have not been able to find a reference to the authenticity of the researcher as an integral aspect of validating the study. It's a sound idea.

The context of each of these interviews is that they occurred immediately before the leadership-program began. The moment captured is therefore in anticipation of the whole management team embarking on the leadership-program. Management has tried to justify the enormous expense of the leadership-program as supposedly benefiting the entire manufacturing plant.

The interviewees are in italics and the researcher's comments or questions in plain print. The language has not been changed from the original although some clarifications have been added in square brackets. The names are pseudonyms. The reader will notice that the interviewers were often directive in their inquiry style.

## Darryl

*Apart from that there's been no change to my group so ....you sort of say to them [my group members] 'Oh there's no change, we're effectively as we were before' but if you get asked a question like 'What's happening' there's this uncertainty as to...*

About what is actually happening?

*Yeah. You tell them that nothing is happening because nothing is happening. But there's still this thing - like we hear these rumours about such and such happening over here and there and often there are things that are happening that I don't even know about.*

So would there be a sense that you are not being informed?

*I don't know exactly, because certainly they can never say that I've known things that I haven't passed on to them. It's not withholding, it's simply not knowing and I think it probably makes them a little uncomfortable too. It can make me feel uncomfortable too. Things are happening elsewhere and once again communication is so difficult. You only know what you want to know. And what you don't want to know once you hear it then you don't want to hear anything. So where's the balance?*

So could the vehicles of communication be a bit more from the top [management] through to all?

*Well now it's less of the top now, it's more the structure of it. It's a matter of the management team with their covenants. I don't know whether you've seen their covenants. There is a set of covenants that have been drawn up for that group, right, which covers things like communications within the group and the fact that you act as a team you don't act as individuals. So even if someone else in the team isn't doing something that you like, you don't go off and whinge to other member's teams or whatever else, you address the problems directly to that person. It doesn't mean to say you can't highlight issues that you're unhappy with but just highlight them in an open forum not a closed forum.*

And do people do that?

*Yeah I think it's a lot better than it has been. There used to be very much grand structure, I can imagine the weekly meetings of the branch managers was sort of one having a go at the other one. Now it's more of the team, there was a set of covenants drawn up that you agree to. One of those covenants is that you support the other people in the team, so if one of my people starts to question something that's going on, I support that that decision is right. I don't say to them 'oh yeah, that's stupid, we totally disagree with that' because your part of the team has made that decision. You may disagree with that decision but it's a team decision. I think that's a good way to work together.*

*I see changes that are made and then management asking everybody 'What do you think of the changes I've made?' well, I say, ask the question before you make them. As in -What sort of changes would you like?*

*I think what you're saying is that it is important to actually find out from people what changes they believe are necessary?*

*I've been telling quite a few of them [the managers] quite a few times.*

*Have you?*

*Oh yes.*

*And do you feel that they listen?*

*They listen yeah but if it doesn't suit the goals, it's not used.*

*And do you understand why not? Do you get a reasonable explanation?*

*I accept that it's a reasonable explanation but not a logical explanation for the benefit of everybody - no. So we're in a position now where a lot of us are involved in a major change that the company's asking. It's happening and award negotiations are happening at the same time as the business unit and major change in management commitment. So we're sort of trying to work out and get our ship in order before we sort of contribute heavily. In the company's view, even though we contribute in doing our job, the changes that are made for us to do our job, aren't made here.*

*So those changes are made already from outside of this manufacturing plant, is that what you're saying?*

*People want us to have an input. Us being the people who aren't instigating the changes. But simply ask our advice on it, advice as to what changes you can see six months down the track to now. I would have thought to actually invite us to participate in the changes...*

*Mmm...*

*It's simply a matter of asking a cross-section of people what they think. If you're asked to work under something, by all means we will; but at least ask what we think of it.*

## **Charlie<sup>9</sup>**

*I hope so. I really hope so because unfortunately, at the moment, it's the union that I believe are the lateral thinkers and have got the vision. And I believe it's the management that are blinkered and it should be the bloody other way.*

*They should be leading...I believe. I get annoyed with the work force when they tell me about negotiating. They still believe the company are more skilful*

<sup>9</sup> Charlie is a union committee member.



*than we are and they're not, they're miles behind. Miles behind. And that's the problem. If they had the expertise...*

*You get blinkered as you go up that ladder.*

*They are blinkered. But they're all engineers you see and they're all top engineers in their field.*

*But that can make you more...the more specialised you are, the less human you can become and a lot of these issues are about human beings. They are the ones we are talking about...*

*Oh I've told the managers, when we were told the new structure, that in my opinion you [management] need to employ a person if you haven't got that person to deal with the people. You need a people person. You run the assets, you do the technical side and have a ... whom am I going to deal with as the union rep? You're going to be that busy running the asset you're not going to want to deal with me and if the complaint's about you, whom am I going to deal with? I can't go round to [the CEO];<sup>10</sup> he's too bloody busy for me to go in and out. He won't want to deal with that anyway. And I said we need a really good people person in this organisation and that's what we're lacking. That's what this thing is about, this leadership training.*

*That is what we're lacking and this leadership-consultant will not - I'll go on record now - she will not make some of these managers any more skilful at dealing with people.*

*If it's only one, it's got to be better.*

*To me that's the main problem at this manufacturing plant. Is that we've got brilliant technicians, engineers, but we're not very good at the people issues and the people...*

*And I think that's what's being recognised by this program.*

*Well people are your major asset aren't they?*

*And as you say it's no good having just words on a wall.*

*The vision. I heard about that as well. But I mean, I suppose I've given a lot of negatives, but there are a lot of positives obviously...*

*Oh no, you've given lots of positives about the technical competence of the place, which is swimming along.*

*It's a good place to work. Morale's probably gone down over the last two years. It was on a high about '92, '93 I suppose, and it ebbs and flows like anything.*

*Uh-huh*

*It depends what you compare the morale to, I suppose. We had a survey done probably about six months ago and the major problem across everybody. Most people filled it in, was leadership - lack of. And that came from the leaders themselves. That in itself to me is a problem because I will bet you now that every leader that put down leadership as a problem didn't think that they were the problem.*

*At least there is recognition that that's the soft underbelly of the system.*

*That's where the issues are.*

*And people like to be led. They like to have guidelines. They like to know what the guidelines are.*

*I think that's what we were saying about decision-making.*

<sup>10</sup> The name of the CEO has been removed for confidentiality.

*They like to have guidelines and they like people to be consistent. Now we've had managers that have been real decision makers and we know they are going to make decisions that we're going to hate, but we respect them because they make decisions. We don't mind them making decisions; we like them to make them but you can't be everything to everybody. Which some people try to be. I really think that's a real problem when there isn't a line that says, 'I am responsible for all the decisions here. Outside of that someone else is responsible'. That's what's missing so often. People talk themselves up into the next category. 'Oh yes I can do this' and they can't do that. Well that's what happens. You get promoted to a level of incompetence aren't you? Instead of sitting where you're happy you go one step too far and that happens all the time in this place.*

*But I mean XXX's no different from any other multi-national big operation.<sup>11</sup> As I said there's a lot of positives. Good conditions, good money. Relatively high skilled work force, when you analyse it, it's pretty good. So why do we have these issues?*

*Because human beings...*

*That's right. They don't want to work just for the money and they don't want to feel that they are working harder than they should have to.*

## **Terry**

*I think at the moment my disappointment is that the people [managers] that come and talk to me and sort of stand up and come in the door and say, 'How are you going Terry? Are there any problems?' and they are standing up and they've got one foot out the door again and they don't want to hear about my problems or even if I haven't got any. It's not a really good way of going.*

*Which people would these be?*

*That's the asset manager or even the manufacturing plant manager maybe. See my boss is away for three weeks. He just comes and goes.*

*But we were talking about that and he was talking about staff development for the whole manufacturing plant and the fact that I haven't got a personal development plan and I haven't got a career path and all those sorts of things. Well it all goes back to the same thing. I've never really forced the issue so people have let it go because they don't believe it's important. But I keep telling people it is and they say, 'Well yeah, all right, we'll do it next year for you'*

*So it sounds like you've also had two minds about those development plans. On the one hand you're feeling okay and you'll just do your job and you'll do it really well, but actually there's this little sense of 'it would be quite nice to...'*

*I believe that people's reports should be reviewed every six months. And again, if no one comes to you on a daily or a weekly basis and says, 'Oh I think you did that job well' or 'you did that poorly'. Over the past few years no one does that, and then gives you feedback on the spot and then we don't do any reviews and we have this customary performance review at the end of each year and they say, 'Well there it is, take it or leave it', and you will be*

<sup>11</sup> Name of the company is withheld and referred to henceforth as XXX.

*thinking, 'Well, I've been performing badly all year, and you've been losing money. Why have you let me go on for a whole year?' When you need discussion there and then, they say, 'Well, we'll organise some training for you for next year', and then they disappear.*

*It doesn't happen?*

*It doesn't happen. That's been happening to me for quite a few years now so I just don't do anything*

*Do you feel let down by management?*

*I've been around with all the managers now and we're back to the same one again and he has to sit down and say, 'Well, we've developed this personal development plan for you' and I say, 'you told me that five years ago in the back of the bus and you didn't do a thing'.*

*Is it now up to you to ensure that that happens?*

*I just find at the moment, I guess if people aren't talking to me then I must be doing my job all right and that keeps me going. But that's not going to work all the time.*

## **Peter**

*Well, on that - we need to be able to show when it comes back to communication -everyone knows what's happening outside. So when I get a hand-over from when I come on from my five days off, the person there should be able to tell me what's happened over the last five days. What's broken, what's not broken, why it's broken, why we're here, why we're there. It doesn't have to take hours, we have methods, we have whiteboards, we have clipboards, but we don't keep them up to date. It's the first thing we're aiming to do, to get everyone working the same way and things will be kept up to date. If you were in charge of the hand-over side of things, what would you institute as an optimal way of operating in the circumstances?*

*Again we don't have to institute anything, we've got it all there, and we just have to do it. That's the big problem in this place, we keep on instituting these things, but we already have them.*

*So are you saying that actually they're already there in place but they're just not being instituted?*

*We don't use them properly.*

*So how come that breaks down? Is it just habit or ...*

*Habit and laziness! They get away with it so... It happens a lot with anyone, the habit becomes laziness, and you don't get pulled up for it so...*

*You don't get pulled up for it?*

*Someone drops it and the next person doesn't bother about it, and in the end you just don't see it any more.*

*And then you feel the effects of that though.*

*That's why this is happening I believe, because we haven't stuck to a routine that we had back in the bad old days. There were some bad things in the bad old days, but there're also some good things and some of those were just basic routines. Communication was no better, but people did what they had to do.*

*And things have changed in this largely? What is that? Is it a more independent drift or something that is...?*

*Well we are now given a lot more independence than beforehand. A long time ago, we were called a plant attender and a leading hand actually told you what to do. You didn't think for yourself, you just opened that valve or shut that valve. Why - we didn't know. Whereas now each guy who's qualified out there is responsible for his area, his unit, and he should be able to start it up and shut it down, fix the problems. If there's a problem out there, get someone else to come and have a look at it but he shouldn't see a little problem and say 'Leading hand come and tell me what to do'. He should be able to start progressing and fixing it, or getting on to the people, he needs.*

*That takes responsibility.*

*So we've got that responsibility. Some people, they've taken it the next step and said 'Yeah I'm responsible for it so I don't have to do it...that's not a hassle for me so I'm not going to talk to you about it'. 'That's too mundane, I don't want to do that so I won't'.*

*And this is gaining ground?*

*It's not just us...*

*No? Is it like a trend?*

*It started here in middle management, 'Let's not make a decision, because it may not get the bonus at the end of the year'.*

*So do you think that that's the general current? That people are not taking the responsibility?*

*I don't know if you've seen the survey that was done a while ago or heard of that, one of the big things that came out: People used to say, 'I want the managers to manage' because there was always some one to turn to. 'Better not do anything we might upset someone'. Then they turned around and said, 'this is what we're going to do...this is our new system'. People started getting upset. Some people said managers have to manage... other people I've talked to say it's missing in other places as well, so...*

*What would you like? What would your preference be? Would you prefer to be back in that old system?*

*No.*

*No? That's not the answer?*

*Where we're going at the moment is good. We'll see how it works. They've said, 'We will manage, we will lead' and you guys are accountable and we'll see in six months time if someone doesn't perform either in the team leaders job, because if it's still the worst one after three months they'll say, 'Well what are we going to do about it?' and three months later we're still the worst team. If nothing happens, if that team still continues not to do their routine...well it hasn't worked.*

*Right, so time will tell.*

*I'm a bit of a black hat wearer, but this one I think should work, so I'm more in favour than I am enthusiastic about this, because we need to change.*

*There's a positive there, people can see it, and as long as people do the things that they talk about, it should be all right.*

## **Using the narratives**

The above extracts are from four of the forty-five hour-long interviews from the first of the three visits to the organisation. They are shown in order to provide a taste of the transcript quality. As has been stated, the transcripts are not, strictly speaking, narratives although there is a narrative or story underlying the text that can be easily extracted from each transcript. Such transcripts can be loosely referred to as narratives. In this case they supply the data for creating a new narrative. Expressive phrases are extracted from these texts and used to create a combined narrative of a number of transcripts. Before describing the details of the narrative analysis, it is useful to give a historical and theoretical overview of narrative work. The following provides some background to how narratives have been used in organisational work.

### **Narrative - in organisational work**

Narrative, as a tool for organisational sensemaking, has earned a respectable place through the past thirty years. Beginning in the 1970s, Clark and then Mitroff and Kilmann (Czarniawska 1998, p.14) collected stories from the organisation floor. Whilst the first use of narrative was as a tool of analysis, the process of telling these stories is now frequently used in the construction of meaning in organisations. Organisational stories have, over time, achieved increasing legitimisation. Stylised tellings are also used as a tool for teaching students about organisations (Czarniawska 1998). The use of a narrative style has changed from the stories being like artefacts waiting to be found, to the storytelling representing a continuous process of meaning construction (Czarniawska 1998, p.15). Weick (1995), who has written extensively on the use of narrative for organisational understanding, brings an interpretive approach and provides the basis for the use of story as a means to furthering organisational dialogue. He suggests that the story is not necessarily about finding the truth; it is rather about coherence and plausibility. The assumption is that people are not necessarily preoccupied with achieving the truth because of greater importance is telling their truth. He believes in the telling of a good organisational story as the ultimate form of organisational sensemaking.

Narrative is a way of knowing or storying the world. Bruner (1986), whose work in narrative understanding is widely quoted, distinguishes a narrative way of knowing or thinking from a paradigmatic or logico-scientific one. The two are distinct from and irreducible to one another. Polkinghorne (1988) has shown how this distinction is applied within narrative work itself by differentiating between two types of narrative inquiry.

**Analysis of narratives:** these are studies whose data consists of stories or narratives but the analysis produces paradigmatic categories.

**Narrative analysis:** the data consists of actions, events and happenings but the analysis is directed towards the creation of stories.

The majority of narrative work in the field uses the first type. Here the transcript of a story of an event or series of events, as told to the researcher either through the written word or by interview, is analysed line by line in order to locate particular themes, either covert or overt. These themes form the basis for a report. The second category begins with data that is not necessarily a storied account, and the work of the researcher is directed towards the creation of a narrative, which carries the explanatory power.

Narrative analysis has been the focus of this research work. Narrative analysis sits comfortably within the qualitative research paradigm. As a linguistic form, it is particularly suited to the expression of human experience as it is lived. Its value is that of drawing together diverse threads of events and happenings and integrating them into a temporally organised whole. At the same time, 'it preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts' Polkinghorne (1995 p.23). It thereby focuses and maintains the specifics and what underlies that, as opposed to reducing events to rules and generalities.

But what is a story or narrative? Polkinghorne (1988) explains that a story or narrative is distinguished from simply a series of events because of a plot. The plot gives the story a purpose, drive or direction. Events and actions are related to

one another by configuring them as contributors to the plot. The unfolding development culminates in a denouement, which is like a solution or outcome to the plot. The data, which in this case are the transcripts of the interviews, is scrutinised for individual events or expressions that provide an understanding of its idiosyncrasy or particular complexity. The eventual story or the newly created narrative is dependent on the interaction of motives and events or on the tension of opposing forces.

The purpose of narrative analysis is to therefore to produce stories as the outcome of the research. These stories carry explanatory power and the reader is provided with insight and understanding of the particular situations or time periods. The result of a narrative analysis is an emplotted narrative. The emplotted narrative provides a retrospective explanation that through the linking together of past events or ideas, accounts for how the outcome has evolved. The steps that Polkinghorne (1988, 1995) suggests in creating the narrative can be summarised as follows:

### **The steps in creating a composite narrative**

- Allow the plot to emerge: find the vein that runs through all the data.
- Establish the denouement: what is the outcome or the solution of the plot?
- Establish the background or the cultural context out of which the study or story will emerge. Questions asked may include:
  - What was the initial situation?
  - At what point does this story begin?
  - What are the contextual features that give meaning to the events?
- Create the protagonist - what are his/her features and nature?
- Find the significant others and particular events that affect the actions and goals of the protagonist.
- Capture all that happens – situations and events of the drama itself.
- Generate a story with a beginning, middle and ending.
- Establish its plausibility by asking: how is it that this outcome came about?

Polkinghorne's account makes allowances for the treatment of a single case study over a defined period. He suggests the incorporation of multiple events or the use of varied sources of information about the life that is being emplotted into the narrative. As Polkinghorne (1988, p.15) says: 'Narrative analysis requires that the researcher select a bounded system for study'. In this case study, whilst the steps of narrative analysis have been followed methodically, the analysis has been adapted from Polkinghorne's formulation in a particular way.

The research targeted the phenomenon of leadership within the whole manufacturing plant. The data for this system would therefore have to include the accounts of many individuals. The outcome of the final narratives intended to combine these contributions into a unified whole. This research process deviated from Polkinghorne's account because of the needs of the situation. The task was to account for leadership from a cross-section of employees in the manufacturing plant. The narrative analysis process became the action of creating composite narratives by combining many voices into new narratives. These were each organised as a developmental, coherent and unified account that could contain different or contradictory voices.

### **The collective story**

Another researcher who has applied narrative analysis to create a unified account is Laurel Richardson (1997). Starting from a series of interviews with someone whose life story made a profound impression on her, she fashioned first a long prose piece and then a poem from her research. This new narrative therefore took the form of poetic representation. Richardson places importance on what she calls the 'collective story' so that the single narrative captures and portrays the experience of the social category to which that individual belongs. The individual expression is seen as a product of an environment and hence part of a collective with which others can connect. These stories become part of a cultural heritage that affects other lives and future stories. 'The collective story overcomes some of the isolation and alienation of contemporary life. It provides ... the linking of separate individuals into a shared consciousness' (Richardson 1997, p.33).



It will be seen how the composite narrative fulfils that ideal of providing a story that expresses the voices of those who are often either silenced or simply remain unheard. The final form of narrative, like the form of a poem, gives accessibility, audibility and therefore communicability that a scientific or paradigmatic analysis can seldom achieve.

I continue now with an explication of the building towards a composite creation. The next steps involve engaging with the expressive phrases and linking them in order to find their underlying connections and organising principles. I first describe the journey of the researcher and then the details of the procedure.

## **A description of creating plot, themes and constructing narrative**

*At the end of reading all the texts, I have before me quite a few comments and thoughts noted during the reading. I now search through the transcriptions and note down all the colourful phrases that I had highlighted. This is a long list (on average about ten to twenty extracts from each transcript) and I begin to group and link the lists of phrases. What belongs together or is linked, albeit loosely? What thoughts are contradictory to other ideas stated?*

*A patterning of the phrases slowly begins to emerge. The underlying tone and sense of the whole are just showing through. I begin to grapple towards what the nature of the underlying story within all these texts may be. I am reaching towards a plot that runs like a vein through all these narratives. I try one and test it against the phrases that I have listed. Can they all survive within this plot? Is the plot broad enough to encompass them? What is the particular emotion, expectation or quality of work life being expressed that is common? I am trying to capture a central tension that can contain this broad range of responses. This then becomes the plot – it is a step forward.*

*I now work towards the denouement. I ask what, because of this particular plot, has thereby unfolded or resulted or eventuated? This is like the outcome of the plot. Again, I have to test several ideas before I am satisfied with the idea selected. The next step is to create the protagonist. This character is like a summation of all the characters. He or she will take the lead (and only) role as the speaker of the soon-to-be created monologue, the new composite narrative. A single character cannot be broad enough to encompass every other character – so I will have to create one that seems likely to take on the role. The protagonist has to make meaning of all of their plights. Will it be a man or a woman? What are their particular dispositions and characteristics? How long should they have worked at the manufacturing plant? I imagine or paint a character that becomes the protagonist for this setting. It's definitely a male and his qualities naturally are common to many of those who I met.*

*I now group the selected pieces into similar categories of experience and name these groups. These become the themes. I seek variety or breadth of response and I also notice commonalities. I gradually find the boundaries of the story and notice what belongs to the story and what defines the story through not belonging to it. New themes are created as phrases are seen to be outside a group. I make sure there is consistency, that the themes are hinged on the plot and that the plot can still carry all these themes. Every phrase is included.*

*Each theme has the potential to represent another paragraph. Some themes have so many phrases that they may contribute to two or three paragraphs. The themes will become the pivots around which the paragraphs will rotate.*

### **Phrases and themes**

The following phrases, divided into themes, are all gleaned from the staff group interviews from the period in anticipation of the leadership-program.

#### Pay and fairness

- I believe I do my fair share
- We are fairly well paid
- Would like more choice in how people are moved about
- Its been a real bun fight – people are emotional
- If it's a gain for some and not for others, its unfair
- You have to recognise people ...can't just give a pay rise
- Its hard with the award scheme - you need more imagination

#### Them and us – with them as management

- They listen, but if it doesn't suit their goals, then it's not used
- They are so wishy-washy – there needs to be someone in control
- They always have one foot out the door
- They don't want to hear my problems – but still rely on my ...
- I feel excluded from the upper levels
- We are closer now to the decision makers with a management layer removed
- I can feel the incompetence of management
- My boss is away for three weeks, he comes back and then seems to go again

#### Relationship to structural changes

- The ship is on course but the course is not communicated
- The new business units are a step forward
- My input was not considered before the changes were made
- The past way of doing things was better
- I'm a bit lost – I don't know anything
- I've been here a long time and I've seen it all
- Where we're going is good, we'll see how it works
- As long as people do the things they say, it should be all right

#### Dissatisfaction with the organisation

- My skills are not being used properly
- Poor communication
- Lack of diversity...cloning of XXX
- XXX tattoo on your rear end
- Dissatisfied and cynical – all these closed-door meetings are destructive to morale
- There were some bad things in the old days and communication was no better, but people did what they had to do

#### Emotional dispositions

- Other people get upset about things I wouldn't
- It's difficult to put my own way aside
- Being driven crazy by the lack of level-headedness
- I'm sceptical

#### Relationship to personal goals

- There is no real end result I'm striving for
- Just want to get backlog under control
- I have no faith in PDPs – vague and ignored<sup>12</sup>
- Lack of achievement because of all the changes
- Managers don't act on the PDPs anyway

<sup>12</sup> The acronym PDP was widely used at this organisation for Personal Development Plans.

### Communication

- I guess if people aren't talking to me, I must be doing my job all right
- Within our different technology teams, the communication is not much good either
- Don't need communication meetings to communicate
- We keep on instituting communication structures – but we already have them
- Habit and laziness get in the way
- Disappointing not to know where you stand

### Trust and longings

- I would like to feel more trust
- Want to feel trusted and trusting
- Longing for things to be better
- Nothing ever changes
- People say things and do otherwise

### Thoughts from staff about the leadership-program

- Now there'll be even more time with these people away
- We've done this – we've been here before
- I continue to be a black hat wearer but I think this should work
- I'm in favour and I'm enthusiastic because we need to change

The above expressive phrases are referred to as meaning units within a phenomenological methodology. They have been drawn out of the texts and grouped into themes through the immersion process already described. At this stage of the analysis, I would like to show how this research has deviated from conventional phenomenological methods.

### **An applied phenomenological methodology**

A pure phenomenological method based on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty or Heidegger would have taken the above expressive phrases and used them towards achieving a tightly framed comprehensive structure of leadership. This final statement, also called an essence of leadership, is usually a few lines or paragraphs long and

represents a synthesis of all that has been said in the interviews as well as the author's own thoughts and ideas about leadership. This was not the direction taken by this study. The participants' engagement rather than a theoretical understanding of leadership, directed the needs of the study. It therefore became imperative to integrate the many voices as narratives, into the analysis.

Whilst Polkinghorne (1988, 1989, 1995) has written extensively on both subjects, narrative and phenomenology, he has not brought them together or overtly recognised the possibility of relating them. Perhaps it is because he has tended to focus his narrative analysis work on the single case study approach. When he does refer to several cases, the tendency is to find one that typifies the others and therefore still approach the phenomenon as if from a single case (Polkinghorne 1989). Giorgi (1985 cited Polkinghorne 1988, p.211) has developed his phenomenology by using many subjects in order to understand a phenomenon. He calls his approach empirical phenomenological analysis. It begins with the individual descriptions of an experience and then builds through a highly structured analysis towards a general description of the structure of the phenomenon. The outcome is a description that, whilst it has general and intersubjective agreement, is abstract and removed from the individual instances of the phenomenon.

In general, phenomenology is a philosophical enterprise whose practice is geared towards building a body of knowledge and theory. In a paper called *From Meaning to Method* Van Manen (1997, p.345) contrasts the thematic and expressive dimensions in an inquiry and invites the shift from asking, 'What does the text speak about?' to 'How does the text speak?'. In the latter the text seeks an expressive rather than a theoretical meaning with the intention of causing a reverberation and an immediate seeing of meaning in the reader. The purpose is an existential, embodied and active understanding. This stands in contrast to most traditional phenomenological works that tend to be highly theoretical, analytical and conceptual.

The method employed in this study has not evolved through a rigid faithfulness to phenomenological methods but rather faithfulness to a fundamental aspect of the phenomenological method; this is the reflective and engaged experience of the researcher at each step of the way. It has also built the understanding of the phenomenon to meet the needs of the subjects in the organisation itself. Its goal was not the structure of leadership as an essence in itself. I therefore characterise this method as an interpretive, intersubjective, receptive phenomenology.

It is interpretive because it is not interested in isolating an invariable structure of the phenomenon (Polkinghorne 1983). It instead attempts to understand the meaning that the phenomenon has for a particular group of people. The outcome of this interpretive work is an applied method with intersubjective usefulness. The presence of empathy is the category through which I intentionally attempt to have access to the other's experience (Lauer 1967b). Moustakas (1994) also discusses that intersubjectivity occurs when others enter into consciousness in an intentional way. It is like the other then becomes present. In this case study the 'other' are the participants in the study and they are also the clients. The research is marked by a kind of receptivity of the researcher to the needs of and relationship with the client. The responsiveness to each step of the research has determined the direction of the method. This is particularly manifest in the following points:

- the original in-depth interviews
- working with the original transcripts to find the expressive statements
- working with the texts to find the plot, denouement, protagonist, themes
- combining these to evolve a new character, the protagonist

Like an in-depth conversation, each of the above stages involved opening myself in a receptive way to the other or the data. The relationship with the data is similar to the relationship one may have with a person where a process of transformation can occur through the quality of the relationship. Such an attitude involves a deep listening to the person or the data for it to reveal itself.

## **Towards alchemy**

This attitude of readiness and receptivity has led to the metaphor of the crucible being applied to this process. In alchemical processes, the crucible is the delicate glass container that is heated so that transformation can occur within. In these research processes, I felt my body as a vessel, like a crucible; the container within which transformations could occur. The warming up was through doing the interviews at the manufacturing plant, meeting all the individuals and getting a thorough sense of the whole environment. Further heating occurred through immersing myself in the transcripts and locating the expressive statements, the plot, and themes and finally construct the whole narrative. Each stage enabled the next stage to evolve and each was marked by my receptivity because of my experience of the previous event. It was thus that the various stages of transformation could occur. The hypothesis that I have conceived, but will not further develop at this stage, is that this attitude of listening and receptivity, of engaging with depth and empathy is an experience of leadership.

## **Constructing the narrative**

In an essay entitled *Constructing a Narrative*, Joy Goodfellow speaks of narratives as being constructed, scaffolded or created (1998, p.175). Each of these verbs conveys a different aspect and each has significance in the composite narrative creation used in this case study.

The first action to consider is the construction of the narrative. This is the literal process of building up the composite from many building blocks. When creating the first narrative, the details of what was needed for this structure were unknown to the researchers; however in the creation, a prototype for construction did emerge. The construction begins with the receptive quality of attention of the researcher and then draws on the expressive statements and the subsequent themes. These are assembled in what eventually becomes a predetermined structure in order to create the form of a story. The same method of construction is applied to each new composite narrative.

Further units for building the story lie in the scaffolding. These include the plot, themes, protagonist and denouement for each of the composite narratives. They provide both essential support and flexibility in the construction of the narrative. The scaffolds, which were not included in the report for the client, are shown in this chapter for two reasons. The first is to offer additional transparency to the narrative construction. Building up (constructing) the narrative can be seen to be a methodical and structured process. Whilst its appearance is that of a flowing description, underlying structures are firmly in place. They also provide another framework through which to consider the changes and points of comparison between the various groups. One can compare the denouements, themes and plots relative to one another and in that way appreciate the changes over time. Another point of comparison is that of the staff group relative to the management group at any of the points in time. A structural analysis of the composite narratives follows later in the chapter.<sup>13</sup>

The third kind of building in constructing a composite narrative is as creation. This brings a kind of craftsmanship that actually weaves the meaning of the narrative with the lived experience of the characters and links the text, the inquiry and the audience. Here the researcher's knowledge of the context and those interviewed becomes essential.<sup>14</sup> In the generation of the story, this same knowledge makes meaning evident and shows how it can be further explored (Goodfellow 1998, p.175). The creation of the narrative begins with the structural ingredients and at a certain point becomes a personal journey for the author (researcher).

### **The author's journey**

The author of the narrative is interpreting meaning and capturing the complexities and subtleties of the events and personalities. The author lives the particular role and through the act of creating the narrative, creates the self as the required character. This is less a projection than a display of leadership on the part of the

<sup>13</sup> I would like to point out that Moustakas (1994, p.78) uses the term, structure, differently from Goodfellow. Moustakas distinguishes between a textural and structural explication of phenomena. In this case, the narratives represent the textural description and the scaffolding, the structure.

<sup>14</sup> The readiness of the researcher to the context of the research was discussed in the last chapter as a crucible-like quality.



researcher. It is rather like a display of authorial competence for in the fullness of that engagement with the creative process, the boundaries of research expectations are actually transgressed as a new drama unfolds. More than that, the product, the composite narrative, develops an imaginative thread that carries a sense of the whole. This is not an intellectual sense of the whole but one that emerges through the receptivity of the researcher to an essential meaning that is underlying the narrative. It is like the whole organism reveals itself and the researcher is the receptacle and writer of that story. The penetration of the whole to include a sense of the underlying subtext is where the effectiveness of the narrative creation is located. This process thus maintains faithfulness to the lived experience through the researcher bringing the totality of the self as a vessel for the narrative creation. The phenomenology of leadership continues to be explored as lived experience in each part of the research process.

### **Expressing the landscape**

The act of appreciating the experience of those at the plant and thereby beginning to capture and show the whole through its parts is like expressing a new landscape. Bruner (1986) refers to a landscape aspect of consciousness as the definitive characteristic of a narrative. The intention behind creating the composite narrative is to reflect the nature of the particular landscape of the manufacturing plant in relation to leadership as it is experienced at that point in time. Further to the landscape of the organisation, it appears that a meta-level of landscape unfolding is that of the consciousness of the researcher who creates the narrative. This is a parallel second story. I follow with my reflections of the final process in the formation of the composite narrative and thereafter show the narrative.

## **My reflections: From many into one narrative**

*It is time to begin creating or carving the narrative for my new protagonist. I am now to become a semi-novelist as I put all my individual characters into the back of my brain for a mulching process. Armed with the plot and the denouement, I begin to shape my sentences. I will use the exact phrases I have collected and my task is to create the narrative with those phrases forming the bones of the new piece. I now have to supply the connecting tissues and place those bones in position such that they make sense functionally. Within a particular theme, I notice what phrases go together well and which carry intrinsic contradiction. I join some of the given phrases. Where a useful metaphor has been used, I exploit it and remember to refer back to it. I combine those phrases with bits of my own phrases. Phrases like, 'on the other hand', bring in the rich variety of different sentiments expressed and even contradictory ideas.*

*I seek the interfering factors: those enriching moments that are like subtle turning points, that almost confound the story but in the process enrich it by obscurity. As the paragraphs build, my voice as the protagonist strengthens. I feel myself almost filling up with life and a sense of direction; what I stand for and what I feel indignant about. I develop courage and conviction. The narrative creation flows easier. I take more risks and sometimes step beyond what I am supposed to say. I know that I can now trust stepping out as I have immersed myself so deeply in the engagement with each individual. I see now that I have become more than the sum of their parts and have transformed into a leader in my own right. I know it will be provocative.*

The following is the first composite narrative that was created following the process described above. It will be noticed how the phrases that were listed under themes have now been joined together within each theme or category. This narrative represents the staff (non-management)'s views in anticipation of the management embarking on the leadership-program. Samples of the other composite narratives will be found in Chapter 4. This narrative is immediately followed by my reflections written after completing the first narrative.

### **The first narrative**

*The irony is that I almost did not get a voice here today – again. It was felt that one narrative constituted largely of the voices of the management group with a smattering of the 'them' would be enough. But in my longing for things to be better and in my longing for greater trust, I have decided to step out of my usually silent way. I just felt I had to take advantage of this opportunity to tell you –like it is.*

*Thinking about communication is a source of some pain for me. It's continuously spoken of and we keep on instituting new communication structures – but actually we do already have them. I've always said that it doesn't need communication meetings to communicate. I often guess that if people aren't talking to me, I must be doing my job all right and that keeps me going. But then I know that's not going to work all the time. Maybe it's habit and laziness that gets in the way. Then I notice that within our different technology teams, we don't communicate all that well either. Within our immediate team, our little group, we tend to share information really well. You know, I've been here a long time and I've seen it all. Nothing ever changes and I continue to be a 'black hat wearer'. And yet, on the other hand, although these new structures are something of a long shot, I am prepared to see how it works. As long as people do the things they talk about, it should be all right.*

*That's the thing that really irritates me. I just find management so wishy-washy. They always seem to have one foot out the door and I mean that literally and figuratively. They come up one day and ask, 'What do you think of the changes we've made?' and I think to myself, 'Well, ask the question before you make them' – as in 'What sort of changes would you like?' I would have thought to actually invite me to participate in the changes.*

*And come to think of it over and above these major structural changes, every year people get moved about. What I'd like to do is perhaps have more choice in the matter. Over the recent years, it's been a real bun fight – people get really emotional. I just hope they take the time to talk to people about what their interests are and about where they want to be.*

*I often feel that my skills are not being properly used. The attitude of the managers is to just let things ride for the year until the performance reviews – and then, 'Well, we'll organise some training for you next year'. The managers don't take up on the PDPs. I get frustrated doing them because I don't have much faith in them. I've always been looking for a commitment from XXX and this would be a path of some sort. It often seems to me that XXX home-grows - you know- those picked from school, put through university degree; those real XXX clones; even have a XXX tattoo on their rear end; well, they seem to see a huge commitment from XXX and they will say, 'XXX is a great employer'.*

*I suppose I am a bit dissatisfied and also cynical. All these closed-door meetings are destructive to morale. The ship is on a course but the course is not communicated. There are so many away days - see my boss is away for three weeks – he just seems to come and then goes again. I do my fair share, I'm fairly well paid, and that's not the issue. You have to recognize people – you can't just give a pay rise. And then the major bugbear is the company's belief in an incentive scheme for innovations. Well no one has ever witnessed it. It's like they rely on me and yet there is no acknowledgement and actually – they don't really want to hear my problems.*

*I guess, more than anything else, I would like to feel more trust. People say one thing and do other things. Even in the bad old days, there were some good things and some of those were just basic routines. Communication was no better, but people did what they had to do. Somehow you knew where you stood. It's all a bit uncomfortable and confusing at the moment. I don't have much confidence in management. Hopefully when things have settled down a bit, I'll be more in control and know exactly what I'm going to be doing and what are the boundaries of my job. I'll talk to you again in six months – if I'm still here.*

## **Reflections on completing the first narrative**

*The composite is completed when it is complete. I have used all the phrases and notes that were scrawled over my papers. I notice that the last paragraph even carries a sense of anticipation or thoughts towards the future. For the moment, I believe that I, as the protagonist, have said all that I had intended. With a little anticipatory wondering, I begin to read through from the beginning and correct sentence structure, grammar and remove repetition. It reads surprisingly well. I take less than a moment for satisfaction and then feel bombarded by doubts about how this form of data analysis will be received by the client, as follows:*

*'Surely, they will find this format amateurish? I have never seen a report written like this, so I imagine they have not either. What if it fails to please them? How disappointed they will be after looking forward to reading the report! Does this report make any sense? Will they read it, let alone make sense of it and recognise themselves within its pages? Maybe we should simply scrap this and write a formal thematic but safe analysis. But I wouldn't really want to...'*

*Wait! In amongst this panic attack, there is a good question, 'Does the narrative make sense?'*

What does making sense mean in this context? Daiute and Nelson (1997) believe that the challenge of narrative texts is that they make sense. They make the case for the application of two important ingredients for sensemaking, based on the pioneering work of Labov and Waletzky (1997).

- Does the script show what is going on here?
- Does the script fulfil the aspect of showing how things are for this group of people?

A narrative is not simply a verbal technique for recapitulating experience. It is necessarily first person and thereby must reflect a particular point of perspective. These two conditions are referred to as the referential and evaluative functions of

narrative. With the referential function, the narrative or narrator gives information by referring to the experience or by recapitulating it. What happens is clearly reported. The narrative thereby individuates the general scripts, in this case the total group of transcripts, by referring to expected and unexpected happenings (Daiute & Nelson 1997). The evaluative function of the narrative enables the meaning to be communicated by establishing points of personal involvement. The narrator's perspective may be apparent.

### **The applicability of the referential and evaluative functions**

Initially one composite narrative was created for the entire group of forty-five people (management and staff). I subsequently realised that this was not adequate as there were two groups with completely different experiences and that to subsume them under one voice would be to repeat the organisational paradigm of the managers imagining that they know what the general staff group feel and think. It would directly contradict the central impact that this research work was trying to achieve, which was hearing and attending to the variety of voices presented. Ironically, this was the staff group's central plea. The separation and creation of separate narratives meant more work for the researchers but it was clearly essential in order to show the conditions of the work life for those on the general staff as discrete from the managers. In addition, it was in the separation that their voices could be well heard and thereby contrasted with that of the managers. The plight of staff became my (as author creating the protagonist) cause.

Through working with the staff composite narrative, I found I could hear the voices of the individuals with their longings for change and improvement shining through the words. I could feel their engagement with their workplace; with their colleagues; with management; with their individual jobs. The tensions had to be clearly uncovered. I contrasted this narrative with the management's narrative at the same points in time and could see the broader picture of the two groups with their own tensions and anticipated learning. I read the texts through again and looked more closely at the new composite narratives. The individual needs were apparent. I could feel the issues and appreciate the idiomatic expressions so

peculiar to this constellation of people. The message of the general staff group (staff) held strong points of view and expressed dissatisfaction in relation to the managers' actions over this time. The narratives show that many people anticipate that the problematic communication will improve with the upcoming leadership-program. The distinctive voices are clear and the referential aspects have been fulfilled by this medium of analysis.

The other aspect about evaluation questions whether the narrative actually shows what is going on in a place at a particular time. In this case, I believe the application of this question is whether it offers a clear sense of the leadership present in the organisation. The themes dealt with are quite broad and show the individual in relation to themselves as individuals; in relation to the organisation as a whole; in relation to communication; the management; their personal goals; and leadership in general. Whilst much is verbally stated, it is the quality of languaging and especially the colloquialisms that carry these messages in a penetrating way.

In consideration particularly of organisational needs, Weick (1995, pp.60-61) asserts that while accuracy is valuable, it is not necessary:

*Something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to contrast. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story.*

## **A Good Story**

After an extensive list of expressions to what constitutes sensemaking in an organisation, Weick (1995) boils it all down to 'a good story'. What does it take to make a good story?

Telling a story is an interesting turn of phrase. It is often associated with the telling of a lie. Perhaps this association is because a good story is hard to find; it often emerges out of someone's pain; it can include a series of transformations; it

may be almost unbelievable. A good story implies that it has been stored, kept, digested until it finds its right time to be told. A good story resonates, is believed and trusted, finds an appreciative audience and conveys something. It is verifiable and not miraculous; is new and different. A good story fascinates, is beyond explanation, engages and causes listeners to engage with it.

The new composite narrative created by the researcher in this case study seemed to carry explanatory power. I believe it provided insight and understanding as to what was being experienced by the group interviewed. Polkinghorne (1989, p.57) states: 'The degree of validity of the findings of a phenomenological research project, then, depends on the power of its presentation to convince the reader that its findings are accurate'.

The final judge of how well the narrative captured leadership, as exemplar of that time and place, will be reflected in the response of the contributors to the narrative, those within the organisation. The creation of the full report including all the narratives and how it stood the test of presentation to the interviewees as a cross-section of the whole organisation, is the subject of the next chapter.

# Chapter 4

## Tracking the Phenomenon of Leadership

### Background

Studying leadership as a phenomenon within an organisation is the attempt to understand how leadership manifests within the individual, the social groupings, and the whole organisation. Two natural groupings, managers and staff, are noticed. Each person manifests aspects of their group and of the whole. The influence of each group on the other appears central to the growing understanding of leadership in the organisation. Leadership is thus considered a relational event rather than as seated in one person or group. A central aspect of phenomenology is that one's understanding of the phenomenon is living and evolves. The phenomenon of leadership is evolving through the course of this thesis. Leadership has not been tightly defined. It seems appropriate that the assumptions in relation to the fluid and intersubjective nature of leadership be stated. These assumptions or beliefs have evolved through the research work to date. At this stage, they are simply stated without justification or the attempt to rationalise their appropriateness.

- Leadership, as a phenomenon, exists on many levels within an organisation.
- Whilst each level is described slightly differently, like a hologram effect, each also subtly contains all the others. Leadership thus operates as a:
  - personal phenomenon present for the individual in their interactions with others
  - group phenomenon that permeates the subtle body of a group
  - whole organisation phenomenon whose presence is more difficult to pinpoint
- Leadership is not dependant on a position, power or status.
- Leadership is a relational quality whose effects on others can be gauged.
- The presence of leadership can be tapped through in-depth interviewing.
- Leadership is fluid and varies according to circumstances that may be internal or external to the organisation and the individual.



- Leadership is like a synthesis of all those in the workplace. It is not housed only in one group or another but can be seen as an interdependency of all work relationships.

Leadership, as a phenomenon in the organisation, can be imagined with widespread tentacles that penetrate into every aspect of organisational life. It is like an atmosphere that is imbued through the individuality of every person working in the organisation.

## Introduction

*The phenomenologist makes a profound effort to capture, describe and understand experience just as it is.*

Van Dusen (1972, p.8)

A single composite narrative that tracks the tensions and issues of the group out of whom it is fashioned, has thus far been created. A period of eighteen months passed from the beginning of the interviews until the last interview. The impact of leadership as a function of the change over time is of great interest to all stakeholders. This chapter describes the composite narratives created from the interviews with both management and staff groups at three points in time over a period of eighteen months. Each composite narrative is created using the same process shown in Chapter 3, with each incorporating data from the relevant set of interviews.<sup>1</sup> The composite narratives shown here are selections from the original composites created for the client.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of the narrative is conveyed in its language. These narratives use the original metaphors, idiom, particular sentence construction, distinctive words and even repetitions of the interviewees. The language reflects the culture of the group and therefore the narratives speak for themselves. Like a story or a poem, they stand alone and through them, events and ideas are linked into a unified whole and their meaning or message is thus conveyed. For the purpose of showing the

<sup>1</sup> I have not included the systematic details of creating these narratives nor have I included all the expressive statements as a separate category. With the same methods applying, this exclusion is considered appropriate to the purpose of the chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The originals are about double the length of what is included here. My intention is to have sufficient selections to show the flavour and direction of the narratives.

change over time, each narrative is followed by its key emergent themes, protagonist, plot and denouement. These structural components provide another framework through which to review the experience of the participants and gain insight into their predicaments at the various points of time. The possibility for the narratives to induce understanding of and empathy in the various individuals and groups in the organisation was uncertain. They would have to be successful in accurately capturing and transmitting the intersubjective leadership experience. The narratives were to have an impact of unexpected proportions.

### **The participants tell their stories**

In working with the original texts of the interviews (and in retrospect, during the interviews themselves), it was apparent that there were two clear narrative threads that required reflection in this research. The staff and management were the parallel and dominant voices. Whilst there is further discrepancy and variance within these groups, it was found that one composite narrative for each was able to contain and reflect the ideas and thoughts of that particular grouping. The composite narratives that appear, whilst shortened from their original form, have not been manipulated or justified in order to reflect a qualitative progression between the narratives. They appear as they were created from the text, as described in Chapter 3.

The composite narratives of the management team and the general staff group were created based on interviews held before the leadership-program began (time 1), again during the leadership-program (time 2) and then after the leadership-program was completed (time 3). The period between time 1 and time 2 is similar to the period between time 2 and time 3 and this is approximately nine months. The entire study was therefore conducted over a year and a half. The order of inclusion in this chapter will be the actual composite narrative followed by the key themes, plot, protagonist and denouement relevant to that narrative. I begin with the three sets of the management groups (one, two, three) followed by the three sets of the staff group (four, five, six). The sequencing is clearly shown in the following matrix configuration. Immediately after the matrix, follows the first narrative with its key themes, protagonist, plot and denouement.

<b>Narrative Themes Protagonist Plot Denouement</b>	<b>Time of interviews</b>	<b>Group interviewed</b>
<b>One</b>	Before the leadership- program (time 1)	Managers
<b>Two</b>	During the leadership- program (time 2)	Managers
<b>Three</b>	After the leadership- program (time 3)	Managers
<b>Four</b>	Before the leadership- program (time 1)	Staff
<b>Five</b>	During the leadership- program (time 2)	Staff
<b>Six</b>	After the leadership- program (time 3)	Staff

## **Narrative one**

*This up-and-coming leadership development fits into a much bigger organisational change project which began a couple of years back. Our performance was down, in fact we were pretty much on the way out, and we had this rather archaic system of branch managers. The new CEO introduced autonomous business units with a broad and flat management group. Now he is about to instigate this leadership training that will be followed by further training for the levels below our level. The CEO has earned a great deal of respect for his ability and for his commitment to the survival of the plant. These have all been very positive changes as now we are on track and focusing on the real issues.*

*Personally, I have to be a bit cynical, I've seen this sort of thing coming and going every five years or so. This organisation really believes in training its top people but you have to wonder if it's not just following the fashions, ...it seems that you have to do it even if it's just to get the language right. Our CEO wants us managers to be primarily 'coach and mentor' and is very enthusiastic about this program being able to deliver the goods. The little I know about human nature is that everyone needs a compelling reason to change; will this one offer me one? I guess time will tell.*

*By my reckoning, the core of our problem is that we are all so highly trained technically. No competitive company has the competence we have. Yet we have a rigid work culture that is typified by near total avoidance of any leadership direction (other than from the CEO himself) and a domineeringly hierarchical pattern of relationships. There is no question that we need what this program is promising; I just hope that it can deliver it. At the moment we just have the CEO's word for it.*

*The bottom line is that I believe that I could benefit from this program. I believe that, as a leader, it will make me more vibrant and better able to make things happen. The operative word here is 'belief' because at the moment there is an atmosphere of mistrust, a bit like the blind leading the blind. My gut feel is that it's going to be more important for me personally than for the company per se. If I can get a better alignment of my head and my heart then I will be very satisfied.*

## **The key themes**

- The advent of the leadership-program was accompanied by a mood of extremely high expectation.
- The performance of the manufacturing plant had been below target for the past few years.
- Restructuring of the plant into autonomous business units had recently been successfully achieved.
- The CEO was enthusiastically backing the planned leadership-program.

- The desire was expressed to bring one's professional and personal roles into closer alignment.
- The expectation was that the benefits would be more at the personal level than at the business level.

### **The protagonist (a composite of twenty-five individuals)**

A forty-two year old male, very intelligent (First Class Honours in Engineering) and physically fit. In this culture, he dresses casually in worker's drill. He comes with a sense of excited expectation; after all, there has been a huge amount of build-up underscoring the importance of this program for both the plant and the individual.

### **The plot**

This organisation has highly trained and technically competent senior staff. However, these individuals are seemingly reluctant to do what is generally required of leaders, that is, to take on the responsibility of leading, decision-making and resolving conflict.

### **The denouement**

The protagonist, when challenged to grapple with his precise expectations given his reservations and expression of the core issues, resolves the tension by coming down on the side of personal gain over corporate change.

## **Narrative two**

*Being on this leadership-program is like nothing else that I've ever experienced. While we are involved in any of the day-long activities it's really full-on. It's a bit like being in a learning laboratory where we are asked to work on our bodies, minds, everything. Some really important issues, like conflict between individuals, have surfaced and have been worked on in the group. I've found the individual times with the change consultant to be very supportive. The whole thing is a huge cultural change for us.*

*The philosophy of first growing the management group, really being serious about it, and then growing the rest of the organisation through the management group, is a pretty good one. The theory that growing the people will lead to growing the profits makes a lot of sense to me. I admit though we have seen only a little, if any, evidence for this cascading effect but I guess that it's still early days. What we are certainly seeing already is that within the management group, lots of individuals are beginning to act as a catalyst for problem solving which is all pretty positive and has to eventually have an impact on the plant.*

*I feel particularly fortunate that I'm having the opportunity to learn from some very powerful experiences and I know that leadership is really up to me. Still, I have this nagging doubt about how this is going to address the company's key issues. I guess it's that I feel like I've been here before, not exactly of course, as this program is very different. We've often given lip service to cultural change and the really big changes seem to always depend on major outside issues about which we have much less control.*

*We've just approved a number of internal change agents who will receive some additional training from the change consultant and I'm optimistic that this is the right way to go. The idea is that they will offer a modified version of our leadership-program with the aim of embedding the roots deeper into the organisation.*

## **The key themes**

- The learning process has been personally challenging.
- Benefits have come from understanding the power, both positive and negative, of underlying beliefs.
- The emphasis has been on changing personal beliefs and attitudes.
- Improving the quality of relationships has been stressed.
- In-house facilitation is beginning to happen in a limited way.

### **The protagonist**

The past seven months have been a roller coaster of experiences and emotions. The general conclusion is that the program is progressing in a positive manner but the inability of our protagonist to make coherent meaning of his experiences is apparent.

### **The plot**

Members of the management team have become intensely interested in the influence of their inner processes (feeling states, beliefs, values) on their attitude to work and the impact of these processes on improving the professional relationships at the management team level. The desired extension of these benefits to the wider organisation has been put on the backburner.

### **The denouement**

Our protagonist is struggling to reconcile the positive personal benefits with the absence of any tangible organisational impact. His rational argument that it is still too early to be worried does not seem to convince even himself. The dissonance is partly resolved with the proposal to institute a process of internal change agents.

## Narrative three

*I've been looking forward to this interview. So much has happened so I'm hoping that this meeting will help me make sense of it all. The ending of the leadership- program was messy. It was a testing time for all of us and we didn't come out of it looking all that good. Firstly, there was conflict around the two visitors who were offering this really exciting material and I guess it seduced us a bit; seduced us to keep looking at ourselves and, as a consequence, further away from the imperative of impacting on the whole organisation. Then there was the conflict with the change consultant herself. We got tangled up with issues of personality and were distracted from the main game, applying our new learning. It all felt very confusing and I for one was disappointed; we could have done a lot more with facilitation both within and without the group.*

*There is no doubt that as a management group we have achieved a lot. The way that we as leaders of this plant work together, in a day-to-day sense, is really very constructive and supportive - it has to be good for business! However, with the wisdom of hindsight, I do regret that we didn't spend more time - once the principles and approach were in place - developing the capacity and then passing it on to the rest of the organisation. The communication within the management team is very good but there seems to be some sort of blockage around the capacitation and the ability to feed that down to the rest of the organisation. Perhaps I was naive for expecting that once we'd become, you know, more intuitive and creative, more acting out of our feeling, and so on, that this would translate into some pretty visible improvements. Well it's fair to say that that hasn't happened...yet. Of course, maybe these things take years to come to fruition, more like an investment in the future.*

*There have been a couple of truly excellent examples of the success of the program-in-action that could well have been used by the rest of us as models of how we might implement our new learning. What characterised these events were: (1) they were set up as a low-structured group of front-line leaders; (2) they were based on a collaborative learning philosophy; and (3) they involved two-way communication, joint expectations of leadership, and focused on key technical events. The comment from one of the leaders involved was that he hadn't realised that he could have such an effect on other people with little or no baggage having to be dealt with.*

*One of the reasons why we failed to implement more of our learning had to do with our inability to express what was happening. It was as if we didn't know how to start up a conversation about all of this and, if we did stumble forth, how to find the language to make it relevant to those who were not present in the workshops.*



### **The key themes**

- A sense of unfinished business.
- An alternative (and competing) model of learning/change has been introduced.
- New learning (skills, beliefs, attitudes) at the management level was being tested under difficult circumstances.
- The management team was working efficiently and effectively.
- Individual team members experienced increased enjoyment in their work.
- Introduction of techniques to enhance intuition and creativity.
- Instances of the application of new learning outside of the management team, was the exception rather than the rule.

### **The protagonist**

It is nine months before we again meet our protagonist over the concluding round of interviews. The roller-coaster nature of the experience has not diminished. The interviews have provided occasions demanding considerable reflection. The protagonist welcomes the need to answer specific questions about reactions to often intense experiences, in a non-judgmental environment.

### **The plot**

The integrity of the initial learning model (based on the individual being responsible for determining their own learning) had been challenged by the extended involvement of two additional external consultants who worked from a more expert model, based on the expert having desirable knowledge. The result was the reinforcement of their inward-looking focus. The leaders looked to further developing their intuition and creativity with the resultant diminution of the potentially positive cascading effect.

### **The denouement**

In order to come to grips with the self-critique of too much ‘wheel spinning and unfinished business’, our protagonist concluded that the management group created a membrane around itself, that protected it from perceived criticisms by non-participants in the program and ironically, actively precluded any significant direct application.

## **Narrative four (General staff members)**

*I am glad to have this opportunity to tell you – how things really are. You know, I've been here a long time and I've seen this organisation go through many change programs. But real change, that actually makes a difference to our working relationships, seldom seems to happen and so, after many years of unfulfilled promises, I have become a pessimist.*

*Over and above these major structural changes, every year people just get moved about. We would like to have more choice in this; discuss what our interests are and consider our future directions. Communication is one of those subjects that is continuously spoken of and we keep on instituting new communication structures – but actually we do already have them. I've always said that it doesn't need communication meetings to really communicate.*

*The thing that really irritates me is that management is so wishy-washy. They always seem to have one foot out the door - literally and figuratively. They come up one day and ask, 'What do you think of the changes we've made?' and then I wonder why I was not consulted before. Surely, after all these years, and all the responsibility I carry, it's about time that I am invited to participate in the changes.*

*I often feel that my skills are not being properly used. The attitude of the managers is to just let things ride for the year until the performance reviews. Promises of training are made but the managers don't take up on these. I get frustrated doing them because I don't have faith in them. I've always been looking for a commitment from this organisation and this would be a development path of some sort.*

*All these closed-door meetings are destructive to morale and make me feel cynical. The ship is on a course but the course is not communicated. There are so many away days - see my boss is away for three weeks – he just seems to come and then goes again. Pay is not the issue. You have to recognize people.*

*More than anything else, I would like to feel more trust. People say one thing and do something else. Things were more reliable in the days of a more hierarchical structure. Routines were routine. Communication was no better, but people did what they had to do. You knew where you stood. It's very uncomfortable and confusing at the moment. I don't have much confidence in management. Hopefully when things have settled down a bit, I'll be more in control and know exactly what I'm going to be doing and what are the boundaries of my job. Although these new structures are something of a long shot, I am prepared to see how it works. I'll talk to you again in six months – if I'm still here.*

### **The key themes**

- Restructuring of the plant has resulted in insecurity about job definitions.
- Communication structures are in place and yet communication is poor.
- Management is continuously unclear in their messages.
- The hard issues are not about money or working conditions.
- Another leadership-program is not likely to help.

### **The protagonist (a composite of twenty individuals)**

Capable, quiet and reliable, he has seen many managers coming and going. Whilst all the structural changes have been going on around him, he gets on with the job - ensuring the continuous smooth operating of the plant. This employee has been part of the workforce for more than 15 years and is committed.

### **The plot**

Whilst no jobs have been threatened in the recent restructuring, there is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities. The predominant quality present is that of marginalisation of the work force as decisions continue to be made without consultation.

### **The denouement**

A resolute spirit of long-term acceptance and commitment prevails over the current uncertainties.

## Narrative five

*'They're off again' is frequently heard these days, as the entire management go off for yet another leadership session. I do wonder exactly what it is they do at this leadership training. Why is it so secretive and why such a reluctance to talk about it? It's like getting blood out of a stone. And when they do try, it's that badly explained that you can't understand anyway.*

*The big problem at the moment is that we're just getting into the new structure and people are unsure of their responsibilities. Training, job descriptions and boundaries – how far can you go? I know this will take time, but the managers are making it more complicated by not telling us. It looks like they're expecting us to define things. I've started thinking that I'm also included in a training program. Maybe they also don't know what the boundaries are. Maybe this is about we rather than us or them defining the power and control. I wonder if this is an intended outcome of the leadership-program?*

*I do see many of the managers trying to create better relationships. I see them trying pretty hard and although there is nothing concrete to show, they're talking to us a bit more, recognising some of the problems and seem to be addressing the issues. Whereas in earlier times the manager would say, 'I'm looking into it', now you know they're listening, they've heard your point and they're going to give an answer to it. Many of them still do seem to have one foot out the door. Perhaps some of them will never change, but you'd be a real cynic to think things weren't getting better. Mind you, some of the guys reckon that it was due to replacing our CEO, rather than the leadership-program, that would account for many of the changes around here.*

*It's been quite hard with the managers away so much. Whilst we can't rely on them for everything, the big frustration continues to be a lack of proper recognition of us. This includes being prepared to pay for courses for the general or non-management staff. There is a real discrepancy between the words spoken and actions taken. In one breath they will say that you are a part of the team and then the next moment will do something that says 'no you're not'.*

*This leads me to speak about trust – the word on everyone's lips these days. I notice that in spite of the talk and the work being done by management, the class distinction between them and us still gets maintained and reinforced. Maybe it's the old, 'I've got the degree, why do I need to talk to you?' point of view still rearing its head. And then, when they do communicate, it is often airy-fairy, speaking complex words and rather vague. The managers need to earn trust and if they can't talk to us at an ordinary sort of human level, other than always that manager-worker level, then they're not going to build any trust. There seems to be a strong connection between trust and communication.*

*And the last point I want to make is in relation to decision-making and leadership. It seems important at a time when things at the plant are so fluid and changing, to be more inclusive of the work force in the changing processes. We need more clarity on which decisions we are to take responsibility for.*

### **The key themes**

- There is a need for clearer job demarcations, as the managers are not defining work boundaries as they used to.
- A gradual dawning of the realisation of personal responsibility.
- The leadership-program is coated in mystique.
- The distance between upper management and everyone else seems to be increasing.

### **The protagonist**

A few months have passed since major organisational and structural changes were implemented. Whilst our protagonist has settled down into new roles, job definition is still in formation. He experiences the disturbance of management attending the leadership-program, which removes them from the organisation for several days at a time.

### **The plot**

Something different is transpiring at the plant. Although difficult to pinpoint, the continued uncertainty in job definition, coupled with a lack of exact instructions from management, is leading to each person having to participate in creating their own work boundaries.

### **The denouement**

A heightened sense of personal responsibility for job definition and ongoing participation in the life of the plant is emerging.

## **Narrative six**

*When I think back to the first two interviews, I was disappointed, confused and there was so much that I just didn't understand. In the last few months, we have managed to get some answers. I still get frustrated because I expected something different, but perhaps I don't feel as frustrated as often as I did.*

*When I consider that we will never get any benefit from this leadership-program, I feel let down. Or maybe the plant has been let down because I don't see any real benefit for the plant. Management still don't know what makes us tick and the gap between the them-and-us has actually widened in the past 6 months. And they speak so much about this family at the plant. Why? So many promises have been made and where is the effort?*

*Don't get me wrong. Some of management are excellent, but the ones who are bad, are still bad. Maybe some of them will never be able to take on the leadership roles. Some of the managers are apparently coming down a lot more these days, and this is not simply in order to be seen; but they come and they ask about changes on equipment that have been made, and for suggestions or new ideas. In our area of work, we don't see that at all. Our manager is not comfortable in this new role. You can see that he does try and communicate more, but he's really not coming across as natural. Maybe he will need more time. Even some of the engineers who did not attend the course have changed a bit. I see some of them more interested in the operations people, trying to explain things patiently and opening communications more than before. Maybe this is what is meant by the cascading effect of the training. It's a subtle change but it's noticeable.*

*I notice how the management group refuse to speak about one another. This is new and is, I think, as a result of their leadership-program. It's good the way they're operating. We always seem to be talking about each other and criticising. But this also makes them exclusive, almost like they are colluding against us. Apparently an important part of their leadership-program was to make sure they were all supporting the CEO. I suppose they are now. It would be good if we could also support one another in that way.*

*In general, I notice that I am being given a lot more freedom to define my role. So I am just getting on and doing it and not waiting for my manager to define things, and that means that I am less frustrated. I still feel that my contribution is still not getting acknowledgement from the management team. The pressure from head office gets translated into pressure on us to pull together in this business as one big family. The threat of plant closure and consequent job loss are used. Well, maybe I'm a bit cynical - but if you want to be a family it's got to be a two-way thing and the way things are, the management group is just further and further apart. When information continues to get withheld as it's considered too important to share outside of the management group, I guess I don't want to hear any more promises. As family, one should be privy to all the goals and intentions and visions. So there may be the wish for family but there is not the action to support it. I also don't want to hear that change takes a long time. Let's just get on with the job.*

### **The key themes**

- The general feeling at the plant is more positive.
- Changes are subtle and inconsistent across the management group with the realisation that some managers will never change to a satisfactory level.
- There is still a lack of proper acknowledgement and valuing of individuals and achievements.
- Whilst management have become a very cohesive group, the gap between management and the rest of the plant has widened.
- The value of the money spent on the leadership-program is severely questioned for its use is considered beneficial only for the well-being of the management group.
- There is still little open expression of goals and intentions by management.

### **The protagonist**

Now that the leadership-program has ended, there is increased pressure from head office overseas to show results. Our protagonist can see the organisational structures are now in place and values the opportunity of the research process to reflect his sentiments that are seldom listened to and heard.

### **The plot**

Whilst much has changed at the plant, things have not gone as far as hoped. Changes are inconsistent with some managers having greater leadership and others fumbling in their attempts to change old behaviours. The distance between them-and-us has widened.

### **The denouement**

The greater freedom to define work boundaries is both confronting and exciting. The uncertainty with belonging in relation to the organisation continues. This is accompanied by a fatigue in trying to process change.

## **An analysis of the results**

### **The expressive level**

The narratives are the results of the analysis. Their particular power lies in their form as a documentation that can simply stand-alone. In this form they express the experience of leadership of the two groups. Moustakas (1994, p.79) refers to this as the expressive level. He calls it a textural description. This is the content level of the appearing phenomenon where nothing is omitted and every dimension or phase is included and granted equal attention. The total group of individual texts with every theme depicting the experience of the participants are integrated into their creation.<sup>3</sup> Their particular power to convey their meaning is in their expression. They express a multi-layered description of experience; yet they are an outcome or an effect of analysing the data and in that respect, represent results. It is at this level that narrative analysis has the greatest impact. The narratives do not require further analysis; for those whose words were used in their creation understand that their meaning is contained in the very words and sentences.

Todres (1998) argues that the textural dimension of the description brings an aesthetic appreciation of the experience such that understanding can occur in the reader or listener. The texture is the native tongue of Le Guin; the detailed and direct speech of human experience. Understanding, which is a multidimensional and sensual experience, requires this textural dimension within a languaged description.

This textural or direct descriptive level, is the first and most vital level of how these narrative as results, can be appreciated.

### **Structural mapping**

Moustakas (1994, p.78) discusses the idea of interrogating the narratives for the underlying conditions that precipitated this particular representation of experience.

<sup>3</sup> Moustakas expands the textural description into the idea of a composite textural description for which these composite narratives also qualify. The major difference between the composite textural description that Moustakas delineates and these composite narratives is that he does not use the actual phrases that were spoken by the participants; he is not creating a new narrative in his descriptions.



This leads to a structural description and is represented by the plot, themes, protagonist and denouement, or what he calls the scaffolding. These delineate the unfolding of the leadership such that each of these parts can be analysed over time in relation to one another. The movement in leadership can be reviewed in relation to the plot, as plot 1 at time 1 and then plot 2 at time 2, etc. These, either together or apart from the narratives, can be used to map and compare results. These can be seen in a matrix configuration, where comparisons can be made through the columns or by rows, as follows:

Narrative, themes, plot, protagonist, denouement	Before leadership-program (time 1)	During leadership-program (time 2)	After leadership-program (time 3)
Managers (M)	M at time 1 Narrative one	M at time 2 Narrative two	M at time 3 Narrative three
Staff (S)	S at time 1 Narrative four	S at time 2 Narrative five	S at time 3 Narrative six

For each group (managers and staff), the plot, protagonist, themes, narratives or denouement can be mapped in relation to one another or in relation to each of the three points of time. This can give rise to an analysis and comparison of the issues, the atmosphere, the anticipations and hopes of these two groups. The structural description describes how the phenomenon is experienced. It is written from reflection on the textural description and yet its existence has been the foundation for the creation of the textural descriptions. It involves ‘conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining and recollecting, in order to arrive at core structural meanings. Structures underlie textures and are inherent in them’ (Moustakas 1994, p.79).

Moustakas also refers to the composite structural description as representing the whole group by portraying the themes through descriptions that enable one to know the meaning of the work life through the perceptions and images of all the participants (1994, p.162).

With this program evaluation viewed through the window of actual experience, the source of the original data becomes the daily workplace events: have they changed and have the changes made a positive difference. Such an extended exposure to the rawness of experience offers a series of snapshots revealing just how complex is the impact of an intended change and/or leadership development process. It reveals the attitudes and expectations of the two stakeholders: the leadership-program participants (the managers) and those answerable to the participants (the general staff).

I continue with a brief structural description of the expectations of the two groups and the extent to which these were realised through the leadership-program. These are considered only as expressed in the interviews by the two groups. Most of the data informing the following is derived from interviews that are not included in the thesis.

### **Expectations of the leadership-program expressed prior to its commencement**

The critical events that members of the management team identified as markers of success were mostly to do with how they worked with and related to each other, and the impact that improvements in these areas may have on their life outside the plant; whether it be personal, social or in the home. It is noteworthy that whilst some concern was expressed in relation to business outcomes, these were not of primary concern. Major improvement in bottom line performance was not focused on as a goal by any of the participants. The staff group had goals that reflected critical events experienced in their day-to-day work relationships. They focused on what would make their work more satisfying and productive.

**Specific expectations from the management team included:**

- working as a team
- ability to work and problem solve on both the technical and personal levels
- ability to use conflict as a positive tool in decision-making
- the increased ability to bring more of one's personal attributes into achieving greater productivity in the workplace

**Specific expectations from the staff team included:**

- the desire for more direct and open communication with their leaders
- clearer definition of areas of respective responsibility and decision making
- feeling of more trust from the management group
- an attitude of mutual respect for different work roles
- creation of improved avenues for expressing work-related points of view

**Mid-way through the program**

At the mid-way point, there was solid evidence that participants experienced a conflict between the idealism behind the drive for a broad and profound cultural change and the pragmatic necessity of implementing a sharper and more effective business focus.

The majority of the managers were, at this stage, opting for the benefits of greatly improved teamwork, improved problem-solving at the leadership level, and not looking much further than the immediate performance of the overall management team. The expectation was expressed, and held by the majority of this group, that significant positive change at this level would progressively generate a sizeable impact on the rest of the organisation. The management team were experiencing a cultural change in their work practices which they judged, almost universally, to be of great help to themselves and their manner of operating as a team.

The staff group generally expressed an attitude of scepticism when it came to judging effectiveness after six months. There was the common view of having seen it all before, coupled with a feeling of disappointment that only the exceptional senior manager attempted to inform them what actually took place on

their training days and how this new learning was important to the success of the plant.

### **After eighteen months**

In relation to its role as a business unit, the manufacturing plant had exceeded its pre-established targets. Whilst it would be simplistic to draw a direct causal relationship between the implementation of the leadership-program and the significantly improved business results, it is still possible to read into the positive correlation a plausible possible source of influence.

The CEO and management team saw the period as one characterised by very competent management and were satisfied with the improved levels of productivity that had been achieved. None of the staff was willing to claim that it was the leadership-program per se which accounted for the results. In the experience of the management, the leadership-program had been a success. The significant markers of this were: improved teamwork, problem-solving behaviours and effective communication. Overall, the manufacturing plant functioned with increased efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, on the technical level, the plant was performing productively.

What had not become apparent after eighteen months was how the improved skills of all the employees converted into demonstrably superior performance of the plant as a business unit. The management team's self-evaluation is of a seemingly contradictory nature. A number of participants felt that it was too soon to be sure, but underscored the belief that the capacity was now in place and that if a new business direction were to be identified, then the team would rally behind it. Others confidently stated that the main game was the improvement in personal and interpersonal skills and that the insights and new learning would be of professional value to them, irrespective of where they were next transferred. The managers were frequently moved in this multinational organisation. The majority of the participants became preoccupied with a personal change agenda, perhaps to the detriment of the potential gains for the organisation.

The staff group essentially confirmed the evaluation of the managers. They perceived that communication within the management group had greatly improved. Communication from the members of this group to those next in line was only marginally better and when it came to understanding what managers actual learning had been whilst on the leadership-program, they were none the wiser. They spoke of the extremely high expectations that had been engendered before the commencement of the program. In a day-to-day sense, they thought these had not been achieved. There was a general experience of being let-down, as the anticipated improvement in two-way communication could not be seen to have been achieved.

This brief structural analysis does provide a more intellectual level of analysis but standing alone, fails to leave a lasting impression on the reader. It has provided further insight into the patterns of events. And once again the details are less an analysis than they are a direct extraction from the words of the interviewees. The best use for this structural description lies in combination with the narratives towards achieving a more complete and aesthetic dimension of the experience.

I return to the next stage of the research journey. The research report containing the six composite narratives was initially given to the managers and participating staff, and then presented as performance. The structural analysis and various components including the plot, protagonist, themes, etc, were completed for this thesis; they were not part of the original report for the client.

## **The delivery of the research:**

### **A remembrance of the distance travelled**

The research report completed by the researchers was almost entirely constituted by the narratives.<sup>4</sup> It also included a background to the research study, an explanation of the narrative research methodology and the recommendations for the organisation (see Appendix B). Copies of the report had been circulated to all

<sup>4</sup> The actual report included the full versions of the six narratives as shown above and three narratives offering the perspectives of the organisational change agent who conducted the leadership-program. It is not deemed useful to the purposes of this thesis to include the latter mentioned narratives.

research participants and a few extra Human Resource Department personnel. As a result of some of the senior managers' positive responses to the report, the researchers were invited to be part of a discussion of the report with the entire group of research participants (managers and staff), including the CEO. A whole day was allocated at the organisation for this purpose. Consistent with the paradigm of maintaining the research as a lived experience, it was decided to stay faithful to lived-experience and offer a dramatic rendition of the report.

I wrote the following reflections soon after the event.

*About 50 people are gathered in a large room and seated in a circle. Each person introduces themselves to the large group and briefly expresses their reaction to the report. Every person present had read the whole report. Many people say they could not put it down and describe how they continued sitting up in bed, instead of going to sleep, surprised by their interest in a report. Others express either more or less identification with the details; some, including the manager of HR, express great enthusiasm using words like 'brilliant'; most have found it rich and interesting. There is an air of readiness for and anticipation of the day's proceedings.*

*The facilitator (one of the newly-trained internal change agents) is well coached in positive facilitation skills. He seems to invite personal expression, including the rational, the calculated, and the personal emotions and speaks of the need to avoid reactions that involve either blaming or shaming of the other.*

*The first narratives, those from the time before the leadership-program began, are presented remembering the feelings that had been present at that time. The researchers present them as firstly a paragraph of composite narrative from the management followed by a similar paragraph of the general staff group, and so forth alternately.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the first readings, there is a long silence of digestion. The atmosphere feels charged with the sensitivity of what has been said and now there is the possibility of honest responses, tainted with a sense of uncertainty in the air. An in-depth conversation follows which remembers and develops and emphasises some of the issues raised. This procedure is followed for the other two sets of narratives: those created from interviews held during the leadership-program and lastly from after its completion.*

*The quality of the conversation is charged. The narratives have opened the door to issues between the two groups that have not, or previously could not, be spoken aloud. The language makes explicit what had only been implicit. It causes emotions to surface and truths to be told. It appears that things that before could not be said, can now be tolerated. It also appears that many of*

<sup>5</sup> I presented the staff role and David Russell had the role of the managers.

*these truths had been said at times before today but in this atmosphere, they were audible. The other, the 'they', (the staff group in relation to the management and vice versa), who had been kept apart and held in a narrow band of opinion, could now have those bands broken and cease being the 'they'.<sup>6</sup> Most of those present had known one another for years and yet the quality of knowing was as though they only knew of one another. This is not personal knowledge but like reported knowledge. It is the knowledge of working alongside someone, knowing that destiny had placed them there and they just have to get on with it; where the little moments of seeing the other are put aside, and those awkward moments of noticing the emotional life of the other are ignored.*

*As the conversations after each set of narratives continue, various groups (including the industrial union!) speak up strongly for their rights and needs. The facilitator carefully contains the emotional outbursts without judgement or indulgence.*

*The recommendations from the report are read out and considered. Each point is couched in an appreciative way, first emphasising what is positive before leading into what needs to be changed. Every recommendation is accepted and embraced, seen as essentially reflecting the needs of the group. By this stage, new levels of agreement are reflected in a consensual atmosphere of moving forward together.*

David Russell and I left to catch a plane before the discussion had ended. We felt a measure of satisfaction. The risk in creating and presenting the report as a series of narratives had been rewarded and the exercise had been successful beyond our wildest dreams!

## **General reflections**

*Comprehension does not take the form of a theory abstracted from the phenomena  
but rather the form of a seeing embedded in the fullness of phenomena.*

Bortoft (1996, p.228)

Using a narrative approach for this research had been something of a gamble. Whilst I could feel the engagement of the participants in the interviews, it was only in the report presentation that I knew the research had worked well. The positive reactions of the participants provided the final word that this long phase of research had been well spent. When the participants used superlatives to describe their experience of reading the report, it was clear that the narratives

<sup>6</sup> Management and general staff each become the 'they' for the other.

effectively represented each person's experience. The criterion in creating the narratives was that each individual voice would gently and persistently be represented and be audible. Furthermore, through a careful, accurate and detailed revelation of the whole, the organisation will now know what it needs to go forward at this time.

I will proceed now to discuss the long and short-term consequences of this research. As the research report presentation was the researchers' last point of contact with the organisation (for this project), the discussion focuses on this event. However, as has been clearly shown in the past three chapters, this last event was the culmination of a long process of both contact with the organisation, and analysis and reflection outside the organisation.

I will offer my understanding of what constitutes validity for such a phenomenological study. I would also like to position this work in light of both phenomenology and leadership.

## **What happened?**

### **The mask and the mirror**

The narrative telling provided something more akin to a mirror than a statement of findings. Morgan (1993) refers to the idea of resonance as a way of assessing whether there is an echo or a response within a situation because of what has happened. Resonance can be reflected in a variety of ways and the first indication of its presence was the quality of emotional response during the conversations that occurred between the narrative pieces. A great deal of energy was evident. It flared up in emotions such as anger, conflict, frustration, sadness and enthusiasm. It surfaced in responses of silence and the words spoken. Many of those present clearly recognised themselves in the narratives and showed their resonance through the definiteness of their responses. The narratives seemed to open the way for things that had previously not been divulged which now were being heard and understood. Although the narratives referred to events of the past, in the exposition of these events through the narrative, time was extinguished and the emotions of the events were remembered as if in the present moment. Each person



seemed to be drawn into that particular time being recreated. It was as if the text and the readers also disappeared into the illumination of those points of time. The attentive remembering sparked a series of new conversations which apparently could not previously be had.

It was clear that in the organisation the 'we' and the 'they' had been masked from one another. During the presentations each group appeared to be stilled into silence, hearing the experience of the other as though for the first time. Indications of empathy for the other's plight included the acknowledgement of the difficulties faced by the other and a preparedness to work collaboratively with resolution and intention. Anderson (2000, p.7) expresses this idea clearly:

Unique expressions of experiences allow us to see, hear, understand and value another's expression more clearly even if it is not very familiar to us. For an instant, we arrive together at the same threshold - a threshold of appreciating; knowing and acknowledging an aspect of life, we all may share. ... That unique and personal voice (often a passive voice) may transport us beyond our imposed sense of separateness.

Through the specificity of the actual words and phrases of the individuals, there seemed to be a possibility for the participants of stepping from behind the solitariness of their mask into becoming a mirror for one another. The philosopher, Richard Rorty, in an article called *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, reinforces this idea (Rorty 1989). He offers substantial validation for the use of narrative forms of expression as a way of stimulating solidarity and therefore cohesion between people. He suggests that change in attitudes and relationships seldom come simply through ideas or intellectual activity. Narrative provides immediacy for the experience of the other and this opens up the possibility of greater compassion and understanding to develop in workplace relationships.

### **Is this change?**

It is difficult to name exactly what happened or what shifted on the day that the narratives were presented. There appeared to be a palpable change in the hearts of those who attended the day's events, and yet what eventuated cannot be considered as a simple cause and effect relationship. Maturana, bringing a biological perspective, offers deep insight for researchers into the nature of systems and change. He discusses the possibility of conversation as a precursor to structural change and recognises that conversation is a complex event that comes as a state of achievement or attainment.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, '...a conversation, a turning around together is such a manner that all participants undergo nontrivial structural changes until a behavioural homomorphism is established and communication takes place' (Maturana 1978, p.55).

Within the organisational system, there were definite signs that the entire group that participated was ready to work together in ways different from how they had been operating. They had had either a direct or indirect experience of the leadership-program, and the intention for creating a difference in the environment was present as a kind of readiness. Perhaps this is the kind of readiness for action that Maturana refers to above as a 'behavioural homomorphism' (Maturana 1978, p.55). The conditions under which a conversation takes place include common interest, spatial confinement, friendship, love or other emotions that keep organisms together: '...the organisms should continue to interact until a consensual domain is established' (Maturana 1978, p.55). He notes that creative interactions lead to novel behaviour and that '...without them, a consensual domain could never be established, and communication, as the coordination of noncreative ontogenically acquired modes of behaviour, would never take place' (Maturana 1978, p.55).

After each narrative presentation, a conversation took place. A variety of emotions were expressed as questions were posed and challenges proposed. People became heated and challenging. However, each person also seemed to respect their own

<sup>7</sup> Maturana uses the word structural change to mean profound change. For him, structural implies that it occurs in the depths of the organisation and in relation to the organisational identity. This will be further developed in Chapter 8.

and others' emotionally fraught states and the facilitator encouraged openness in each person's opinion. I understand Maturana to be saying that change ('communication' is a form of systemic change) takes place through the interaction of a conversation that is offered freely.<sup>8</sup>

Whilst the narratives were not intended to be cutting, they were certainly strong, direct and honest. However, they were created in a spirit of honouring the unique contribution of each participant. Further, they were not driving any particular agenda and because of that, were offered unconditionally. Those at the presentation were free to leave the situation at any time. It appeared that because the emotions had been given permission to surface, an atmosphere of mutual acceptance or love, according to Maturana, arose amongst the participants. Whilst change was not an intended outcome of the readings and conversations, it certainly became an incidental outcome.<sup>9</sup>

### **Conversations that bring work**

The most powerful outcome from the events of that day was the quality of the new conversations that developed between all those present. The narrative performance was itself like a conversation between the performers (the researchers) and the listeners. However, when one conversation gives rise to renewing conversations, then one can conclude that effective work can take place. Van Manen (1990, p.99) writes: '...often the sense of truth experienced in a good conversation leads to a satisfaction that asks for further work'. By work, he means that the next development is enabled. It is not forced or urged, but somehow gently allowed or brought to the surface. Like some kind of internal generativity, the organisation, in the most respectful way, found the shared knowledge it needed to drive itself forward. The conversations that arose indicated that the group intelligence desired this. It appeared that leadership manifested in the group as the new conversations emerged in the spirit of consensual agreement.

<sup>8</sup> Maturana discusses that the emotion behind such a conversation would be love, which means it is offered without conditions or coercion.

<sup>9</sup> In Chapter 7 this event and its repercussions are further considered.

## **The Usefulness of this Research to the organisation**

The nature of knowing or understanding that has been achieved as a result of this inquiry is multi-layered and therefore difficult to appreciate fully. Polkinghorne (1989, p.58) discusses the idea that phenomenological research usefulness is concerned with seeking understanding for its own sake. The value of the research is considered insofar as it has produced understanding for those for whom it is intended. This understanding addresses the question of *what* the experience is like rather than *why* it has arisen. Phenomenological research can be said to be useful when a deeper and clearer understanding of what it is like to experience something, has been achieved.

Some of the events which validate that the organisational research established a renewed level of understanding, include the following:

- On hearing the research report, participants expressed empathy towards other participants, showing greater understanding for one another.
- The research led to the following actions:
  - new social actions were decided upon, including creating new courses
  - an agreement to listen to one another with the desire to better understand the other, was undertaken
- Renewed interest was expressed in taking the next organisational steps in more democratic ways than had previously been the case. This would include further consultation and levels of agreement before decisions were made.
- Management chose to rethink their relationship with the work force.
- Union members expressed relief at feeling that they had been heard.

## **The role of the narratives in tracking leadership**

Did the narratives succeed in tracking changes in the leadership of the organisation over the period of the case study? The strength of this study is that it relied exclusively on the experiences of the participants to demonstrate the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the leadership-program. The answer to this question about the impact and scope of the research can be judged by the response of the organisation and those within it, to the study. Validation for the client was surely that it would contribute to further positive action. That the overall research and

evaluation of leadership (as originally requested) was considered effective can be seen through the actions that eventuated, as described below.

**Leadership was enabled and was manifest through:**

- Renewed intentions for working creatively and collaboratively between staff and managers.
- A renewed perspective for the future in consideration of the whole group's needs.
- The expressed sense of relief of each group in relation to the other that the issues that needed to be exposed have now been expressed and heard.
- The vigour of the collaborative and emergent leadership was manifest in the joint action of the staff and management behind the conception of a new program to further develop the leadership of the team leaders (about 80 in a staff of 450). The new initiative would be created and designed by representatives from a cross section of the manufacturing plant.<sup>10</sup>

**The participants' recognition of and receptivity to the narratives:**

- The research report was universally acknowledged and praised with statements like: 'I couldn't put it down' and 'It was brilliant'. These comments came from Human Resources, the CEO, union members and others.
- On receipt of the written report, the organisation decided to fly the researchers over to Western Australia and set aside a day for over 50 staff (including the CEO, the entire management team, and shift workers who were off duty) to discuss and work with the consequences of the report as a whole group.
- The researchers were invited to repeat an identical study as an evaluation of another newly planned leadership-program. This would be a larger study and involve double the sample of participants. The team of organisers insisted on including the new leadership trainers in the research to ensure that the research kept close track of every aspect of the training and its participation.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The addendum was the unilateral agreement that a further research study, exactly the same as this one, using narratives as the means of collating results, be an integral aspect of the new training program.

<sup>11</sup> This did happen. A team consisting of a cross section of staff designed a new program for team leaders. The whole range of staff members was invited to contribute to its structure. David Russell and I were contracted to do the research with the added request that feedback be given on a more

### **The accuracy of the narratives:**

- Trust that the narratives, as an assessment of the leadership, were accurate was reflected in the agreement and intention to follow through with every recommendation in the report. The recommendations had emerged directly out of the narrative analysis.<sup>12</sup>
- The fact that the presentation of the narratives caused a reaction implies that they must have hit the mark.

In further consideration of the consequences of this research on the organisation, I would like to corroborate what transpired as a result of the report with a definition of leadership by Senge (1999, p.16). He suggests that leadership is the:

*... capacity of a human community to shape its future, and specifically to sustain the significant processes of change required to do so.*

Senge notes that whilst this is an unusual way of thinking about leadership, it is probably closer to how people actually experience leadership. This is because leadership grows from the capacity to embrace a creative tension and this energy is generated when people tell the truth about their current reality. Perhaps, in the process of the truth being told, and this being listened to and really heard, a shift happens. I suspect that this research, conducted to evaluate leadership, actually generated leadership as the group took the responsibility to shape its next steps. In answer to the original question asked at the outset of this chapter, I believe that the narratives and their delivery were therefore successful in tracking leadership for the organisation; even tracking it into the future.<sup>13</sup>

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regular basis so that the program could be malleable according to the results of the research. A large-scale leadership-program was designed heralding new levels of commitment and trust in the organisation. After about a year during which we, the researchers, had completed two sets of about eighty semi-structured interviews, the organisation amalgamated with an American manufacturing plant. Most of the managers either resigned or were sent to similar organisations in other parts of the world. The still new leadership program was simply ditched, as was the research. One can only wonder about the disappointment of the staff who had experienced a long and hard road of developing trust and a collaborative way forward.

<sup>12</sup> The set of recommendations was couched in an appreciative paradigm. This follows the work of Cooperrider (2000) who has evolved a methodology for organisational change called 'Appreciative Inquiry'.

<sup>13</sup> It was interesting that the consultant who had run the leadership-program found the nature of the report interesting but felt the narratives had not provided enough explanation for why things emerged as they did. She wanted the reasons for the somewhat limited outcomes of the leadership-program to be shown. She believed the organisation's needs had been well met by the narratives, but her own were not satisfied. .

## Back to phenomenology

I would like to now situate this work methodologically in the phenomenological paradigm, as this is not a classical phenomenological study and therefore it is necessary to position its lineage clearly.

Phenomenology began exclusively as a philosophical method and is often called an armchair approach, as all the research and propositions reached are based on the reflections of the researcher. Whilst classical phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (cited Kockelman 1967) wrote on the relationship of phenomenology to psychology, it was Giorgi (1985) who was significant in translating the insights of philosophical phenomenology into a method for psychological research. An intrinsic aspect of this shift is the movement from the single subject researcher to a study incorporating other research subjects (Giorgi 2003). The success of Giorgi's work has resulted in a stream of psychology that acknowledges the realm of meaningful experience as the locus of knowledge. It continues to draw on the philosophical insights of phenomenology, yet is independent of it and has become substantial as a psychological approach in itself.

Self-reflection is typically a process used by both the philosophical and the psychological disciplines, however whilst phenomenological philosophers use this method exclusively, in psychological phenomenology it forms part of the preparatory steps in the data gathering process.

Polkinghorne is another writer who has contributed to developing a growing understanding of the as yet incomplete and ongoing translation from philosophical phenomenology to the psychological phenomenological method.<sup>14</sup> Both Polkinghorne and Giorgi have translated the method for a single subject; and proposed that when there is more than one case, a typical case is chosen. Van Manen (1990, 1997) also takes a psychological approach to phenomenology and refers to his more pedagogically orientated approach as hermeneutic phenomenology. The phenomenon is comprehended from inside through reflective processes, with writing being a central task of the research. His work is

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the difference between the two, and especially the study of consciousness in the realm of psychology, see Polkinghorne (1989, p.43).

not limited by specific numbers of subjects and in general Van Manen (1997, p.346) encourages deviation from any fixed stereotypical methods:

*There is no single method just as there is no uncontested truth. Rather the reason for reflecting on method is to discover the historical approaches and suppositions that may hold promise in rendering human experience interpretable and understandable in our present time and place. ...not to arrive at a recipe ... rather to become sensitive to some of the principles that may guide our inquiry’.*

Van Manen’s interest is in texts that are true to lived experience and are primarily concerned with the mantic rather than the semantic aspects, ‘we try to capture how the text speaks, how the text divines and inspirits our understanding’ (Van Manen 1997, p.347).

Van Manen has been a major guiding influence in the narrative parts of the study. His guidance has also given permission at deviating from the traditional methods. He insists on being faithful to lived experience even though it may mean sacrificing traditional methods (1997). In creating the narratives, traditional phenomenological practices of finding the essential structure of the experience as a short paragraph abstracted from the original experience, have been sacrificed in favour of a different kind of essential structure that serves the needs of the organisational situation and client base.

Another significant influence on this work has been Moustakas (1994). He calls his phenomenology a heuristic research method, where heuristic refers to the process of internal searching ‘through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process’ (Moustakas 1994, p.17). He refers to the subjects or participants in his study as co-researchers, who together with the researcher, create the unfolding meaning-making. His seminal work on the phenomenology of loneliness (Moustakas 1961) is a powerful study whose particular value lies in the development of understanding loneliness for all those participating, researcher and



co-researchers.<sup>15</sup> This work has directly influenced my approach to leadership, particularly as the results were intended to lead to a more profound understanding for all those involved in the study.

The understanding gained is therefore for its own sake or, it can be said, for the sake of the researchers and co-researchers rather than for any generalisable goal. Due to this process, the co-researchers and inquirers have benefited from the results on an intersubjective basis; the resultant intersubjective understandings have manifested in an enhanced presence of leadership for the organisation. It is as though an increased understanding of the leadership in the organisation gives rise to the manifestation of leadership as seen particularly in the shared action taking. This essential aspect of the evolving work reflects the value and usefulness of the organisational research work to the organisation.

Before ending this chapter on tracking leadership, I would like to examine the conditions for intersubjective interpretation in relation to the study. This is essential to consolidate the idea of leadership being experienced as an intersubjective phenomenon rather than a quality that is couched in the hands of one or another individual. It brings the possibility of considering leadership as an organisational phenomenon rather than resting in the hands of the individuals.

The narrative analysis is an interpretative method and the validity of this method has been enhanced through the transparency of each step. However, to consider whether the conditions for an intersubjective interpretation have been satisfied through the narrative analysis, Kockelmans (cited Polkinghorne 1983, p.236) phenomenologist, author and editor of phenomenology texts, delineates five conditions that guarantee the validity of an intersubjective interpretation. The discussion of these conditions serves to complete this analysis of how the composite narratives as the culmination of the study provided an enlivening

<sup>15</sup> It should be said that an integral aspect of heuristic inquiry is that all the participants in the research are considered co-researchers, and each person is more-or-less equally motivated or moved by the topic of inquiry. Moustakas's work on loneliness arose at a time when he was feeling deeply isolated in relation to his daughter who was undergoing major heart surgery. In pacing the corridors of the hospital, he was motivated to further understand his own experience and those of other anxious parents in the paediatric section of the hospital.

reinterpretation of leadership and thereby tracked the phenomenon of leadership for the organisation over that time. The points below show each of the conditions described by Kockelmans followed by how this study managed each one.

1. The autonomy of the object (the phenomenon) needs to be accepted. The source of the articulated meaning is the phenomenon itself and this should not be forced into preconceived interpretative schemes.

*In this study, it is the phenomenon of leadership, as an autonomous voice that is directing the study. As far as possible, the phenomenon, through the nature of the five themes discussed, has not been subject to interpretation. The phenomenon evolves its meaning as a function of the experience of the sum of the individual contributors within the study. The conversations and ongoing conscious reflections of the researchers continuously protect the autonomy of the phenomenon.*

2. The researcher needs to be engaged with a primary source of the phenomenon. Because meanings are generally covered over by layers of secondary and tertiary interpretations, the researcher needs to engage in a more profound way than those who are confronted with them.

*The researchers used 'quality of engagement' as a primary source of understanding leadership within the organisation. The researchers' focus on their own primary engagement in conducting each aspect of the research was their way of guarding against layers of secondary interpretations forming. Further, the creation of the composites used the statements from the interviews that expressed each participant's relationship with the phenomenon. The subjects' direct understanding of leadership was not primarily under consideration.*

3. The researcher must try and achieve the greatest possible understanding and familiarity with the phenomena under consideration. This should include the historical origins and the traditions that have influenced the origins and the development of the phenomena.

*Extensive reading on leadership and on the phenomenological and narrative methodology was done in designing the study. The continuous drive of the research study was towards accessing each individual's personal relationship*

*with the phenomenon. The methodology was designed specifically to achieve the kind of engagement that would enable a direct relationship unsullied by the traditions that fix leadership into a tight interpretive framework. The knowledge on leadership gained through the reading was therefore intentionally bracketed. The chapters on leadership and change (Chapters 5-7) will reflect the historical origins and the lineage of this study.*

4. The hermeneutic circle is the most important of these five canons or conditions. This is the dynamic development of knowledge (or interpretation), whereby the process of coming to understand involves a movement back and forth from the parts to the whole and back again, perhaps several times. This is a process of reaching towards an understanding or interpretation. An adequate interpretation of the phenomenon under consideration can usually be reached.

*The creation of the composite narratives, through developing the plot, the protagonist and the various components; the inner preparation of the researchers towards a receptive positioning; the reading of the individual narratives and the combining them using a part and whole imaginative apprehension; and the writing by the researcher of her own process in doing this work, were all aspects of the hermeneutic circle. The completion of the circle was in the dramatic exposition of the narratives with acts of recognition and disagreement by the participants in the study. The interpretation of the researchers was now subjected to the intersubjective scrutiny of those involved in the study to establish the accuracy of explication. The accuracy or proximity of the narratives became a provocation. The use of group process facilitation enabled the views of all participants to be brought to the table.*

5. The researcher must try and show the meaning of the phenomenon for the present situation. The action is the fusion of the meaning that the phenomenon has for the current situation with a historical and social understanding of the phenomenon.

*The creation of the composite enabled a fusion of the meaning of the phenomenon for the individual with the meanings brought by the group. It thereby situated each person's relationship with the phenomenon into the whole. This was further enabled in the research process through the delivery of the report, for it was here*

*that all who had contributed to the creation of the narratives engaged with the current situation. The meaning making was thereby brought into the present context towards stimulating action as a response to the historical and social understandings received.*

I would like to end this chapter with a question about the generalisability of the content of the composite narratives. Whilst empirical evidence is not available, the composite narratives have been shown to a number of managers and staff from other organisations who have corroborated the descriptions and said that they accurately represent the issues of the relevant groups in their workplaces. Indeed, one academic teacher of Management of Business Affairs at the New South Wales Graduate School of Management believes they are therefore publishable as documents in themselves. I believe that when one penetrates the truth of a situation, it is frequently representative and thereby can be useful to others. However, whilst the quality of expression in the nuances of the language usage may be generalisable and the issues that are referred to may be generalisable, there is an essential aspect that remains particular to the original organisation. This is the action of being a part of and participating in this study.

The composite narratives were the final turning point yet the value of such a phenomenological study lies in far more than the content of the results. This study spanned a long process of interviewing and individual involvement. I believe that each part of the process of the study was essential in preparing the individuals and the organisation as a body for the final report to have its impact. Individuals recognised their voices and those of their fellow workers, they knew that each participant had undergone the same interview processes; they trusted the independence of the researchers. The human engagement that is part of a phenomenological study is essential in creating a kind of imaginary container that was present for the telling of the narratives. The participants were the crucibles through which the transformation could occur.

In conclusion therefore, whilst the method is generalisable with the limitations specified, the outcomes, as data, maintain the greatest value only for the individuals and the organisation they directly reflect. Whilst this phenomenological study was carefully designed and faithfully fulfilled, the results through the evaluation, for fulfilling leadership in that organisation, surpassed any expectations that might have been held by the researchers.

# Chapter 5

## Leadership Dreaming<sup>1</sup>

### Background

The interviews and data analysis of the previous three chapters has fascinated and frustrated me. I believed in the methodology and the value of the research completed both for the client and for the advancement of leadership scholarship. Yet, there remained a sense of ‘something else’ about leadership that the analysis of the phenomenon had not captured. Out of the group of interviewees, a few individuals who embodied something spontaneous and subtle in their leadership particularly interested me. This was not related to roles they played or positions they held. It was not even apparent in the words spoken by them in the interviews. I felt it in the quality of their engagement with the organisation. They seemed to have a capacity for creative perspectives about the organisation. This unquantifiable something expressed itself uniquely in each of these individuals. They were particularly respected and well regarded by their peers, both those senior and junior to them. They seemed to inspire others simply by who they were, although their actions were also thought to be noteworthy. Their way of being touched me for it seemed quite beyond causal explanations of leadership.

This ‘something else’ has led to a very different sort of exploration of the phenomenon of leadership. In this chapter, *Leadership Dreaming*, I have worked with ideas about leadership in an imaginal and psychological way.<sup>2</sup> Like a process of dwelling in the phenomenon, I have attempted to break from analysis of the

<sup>1</sup> The name *Leadership Dreaming* came to me when I was considering leadership in a more contemplative way. Just as Aboriginal people have a dreaming for each of the animal and bird species, I want to capture a broad vision that can track ideas without a set path, and yet following the path itself is an expression of what I am trying to more deeply understand. An anomalous desire, indeed!

<sup>2</sup> Hillman (1992) speaks of the imaginal as being a reflective speculation. The world of the imagination is the only mode of access to knowledge of the soul and the fantasy-image is at the base of every feeling and observation. Imaginative processes are therefore the basis of the mind and of experience.

phenomenon towards an exploration where meaning is sought or created.<sup>3</sup> Drawing on my own experience of leadership by others, I have tried to use imagination and reverie to bring an aesthetic sensibility to the phenomenon. 'Imagination is not, as its etymology would suggest, the faculty of forming images of reality; rather it is the faculty of forming images which go beyond reality, which sing reality' (Bachelard 1987, p.15). Bachelard says that reverie enlarges our lives by letting in that which is usually hidden. I have stepped out of a utilitarian consciousness to be drawn into the phenomenon in order to explore it as a witness rather than a critic.

## **Introduction**

The capacity for good leadership seems to be a psychologically, emotionally and spiritually - based capacity that certainly goes beyond organisational position. It is manifest in particular individuals at particular times, although it appears that some people carry a heavier mantle of leadership than others. The word leadership often jars for me as it evokes something distant, something unattainable. I want to consider how to bring the phenomenon closer rather than allow it to drift further away.

The current edges of one's leadership are also the edges of one's experience. To go beyond these or even to operate at one's leading edge is to tip over the edge and notice the dreaming. The dreaming manifests as the frequent little thoughts perhaps unnoticed that bubble up like a fountain and are almost unconscious. A conversational process and sometimes one's reflections may reach into this fount. In order to explore these arenas, the normal bounds of leadership are loosened and the phenomenon is expanded back to a personal and creative responsiveness. This is achieved through deconstructing the notions of leadership and of dreaming. Dreaming is framed as a source of creativity and of creative response. What happens when leadership reaches towards the dreaming?

<sup>3</sup> Moustakas (1990) refers to the idea of 'indwelling' as a turning inward to find a deeper, more extended comprehension of the quality of human experience. This is like an unwavering gaze into some facet of human experience to understand its constituent qualities and its wholeness.

Leadership Dreaming is a reflective and personal essay that explores the basis of actions that appear to be of an inspirational nature. These are actions that may touch or move one emotionally because of their surprising and appropriate nature. This essay questions the nature of leadership that is embodied; actions that are somehow inspired; the kind of preparation needed to develop an inner readiness for such action.

I invite the reader into an imaginal exploration of leadership; through my South African experience of leadership and great change, and through my imagination. What follows is more like contemplation about leadership than an analysis.

### **A short story – The inauguration**

*The night of May 10<sup>th</sup> 1994 is probably not one that has lived on in your memory. Two events happened on that day. The one was the announcement of the latest Federal budget by the Australian Labour Party. The second was the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Having immigrated to Australia from South Africa only three months earlier, I had a desperate need to watch every moment of this momentous inauguration and was extremely frustrated because I had to watch the budget, which dominated the television space and limited coverage of the foreign event to a minimum. The inauguration was a celebration, a triumph of the forces of good over evil. It was captured in the personality and the supreme leadership figure that Mandela represented. Here was a man who had retained his vision, his 'dream' over a 25 year incarceration; a man who is Black; a member of the often oppressed peoples of the world. The event had a sense of the magical or the extraordinary. It was unrecognisable in any terms other than that of a dream being realised. The extent of its peaceful realisation could never have been planned for - ten years, five years or even one year before. Being a South African had previously carried a sense of shame for me; this night, I experienced enormous pride as well as a longing to participate in the work that would be needed in the years ahead.*

### **The Process: a dreaming and a realisation**

The experience of the preceding years, especially the pain of the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa, makes the inauguration event seem magnificent and, contextualised within the supreme work and effort of countless people, a simply appropriate and beautiful resolution. This crowning moment was part of a dream that was claimed by many people, ordinary people.



For about a decade before this monumental event, various groups of people had begun taking the risk of crossing the racial divide. Women had been illegally meeting in small gatherings. Multi-cultural youth programs were created. Some businesses had been taking affirmative action to address past injustices and to overcome apartheid-created boundaries. Countless other individuals and groups displayed acts of courage in taking steps towards creating a more just society. Each of these attempts involved great risk and even attracted physical danger to the participants. Most were illegal. Punishment resulted in incarceration or death. Courageous action was often thwarted. Depression and hopelessness were close companions amongst the population in the country at that time.

Personally, as an English speaking white South African, I had always felt marginalized in that society. There were two major players in the battleground: the white Afrikaner regime and the Black majority parties (the African National Congress (ANC) or the Black Consciousness movement). Whilst my ethical vote and identification was clearly with the Black majority, I was acutely aware that I was not a part of that cultural group. I supported the downfall of the government, and passively accepted the seemingly inevitable revolution and bloodshed that would necessarily follow. It was either that or the maintenance of an impossibly racist and immoral regime. This was the situation through the 1970s and until the early 1980s, when a significant turning point in the way of conceptualising outcomes for South Africa arose.

Clem Sunter, an executive with Anglo American, had been working with the scenario planning team of the Shell Oil Company.<sup>4</sup> In 1985, he lectured and launched a book that changed the conceptualisation of two seemingly dismal outcomes for South Africa and offered a new vision for the future of the country.<sup>5</sup> He spoke of a 'high road' and a 'low road' vision for the future of South Africa. The high road acknowledged the unsustainability of both apartheid and the current

<sup>4</sup>Clem Sunter is now a motivational speaker on the South African speaker's circuit. He is the author of a number of books including a recently published book on the AIDS crisis in South Africa. His book *The High Road – Where are we now* was published in 1984 and emerged out of his work with the Shell scenario planning group.

<sup>5</sup> Further information about the Shell scenario process can be found in Jaworski (1996, p.148). Jaworski was chairman of the Shell scenario group for 4 years.

levels of violence and bloodshed of the Black movements. It offered a vision for a future or transitional governance that included representatives of all racial groups participating in the creation of a shared future with an open political and economic system. Business would be a major player in forging this way ahead. Strangely this was not a scenario that had publicly been expressed before. The low road meant that any one of the major players would control the outcome. It was not relevant which player had that role - either the Afrikaner minority apartheid government or one of the Black movements.<sup>6</sup> Each solution excluded the other groups. As the two possible scenarios were fleshed out, it was realized that either of the visions was possible. Scenario planning itself is a dreaming process for it is a dreaming into possible visions for the future. Suddenly there was the idea of a dream that was inclusive and broad based; although it was accepted that the transition may not be peaceful. The vision was inclusive and belonged to all of us, as ordinary people, irrespective of particular orientation.

This was inspiring. I began to believe that I had a part in the creation of the future of the country. Dreams of change were already arising in the hearts and souls of many people, but the possibility of a democratic and non-violent way of creating it was new. This way of thinking invited all racial groups to participate; it thereby offered the potential for the population to free itself from an endemic self-protective, fear-based response to the country's predicament. Soon, many unpredictable quarters of the population, including the intelligentsia of the conservative apartheid movement, began to share in this vision of a high road. This development started occurring about five years before De Klerk's historic speech in February 1990.<sup>7</sup>

The process of dreaming a new nation into being was a long and incredibly arduous one, characterized by pain, doubt and frequently, disillusionment. The

<sup>6</sup> At this stage, the Black Consciousness (BC) movement and the ANC (African National Congress) were not very different in ideology. It could be said that BC was more exclusive of white people but both had already been driven to militaristic solutions and were determined to achieve power albeit with violence.

<sup>7</sup> De Klerk was Prime Minister of South Africa in the years before Mandela was elected President. In February 1990, his address to parliament shocked South Africans because he permitted (cancelled the ban on) many of the previously prohibited organisations and indicated that Nelson Mandela would be released from his more than 25-year incarceration.

possibility of coming through the years of apartheid without a massive loss of life had always seemed remote. Now, Mandela, in becoming president of the South African nation, reflected back to the nation what it was already demanding. The inauguration itself became an important symbolic world event. It represented peaceful liberation, political fairness and a leader who assumed world wide heroic proportions.

## **The concept of leadership**

Working with, reading and thinking about leadership over the past number of years, I am struck by how young and actually immature our conception of this subject still is. People may either like or dislike leaders. They meet one's approval or they do not. The very notion of leadership conjures up literal meanings as individuals, cultures and communities. Expectations of the population are for their leader to be cloaked in heroism.

I regret using Nelson Mandela as the exemplar of a leader in my story, because he distracts us into the common notion of leaders as being people on a pedestal, somehow apart from ourselves. He thereby easily becomes a heroic figure and far beyond the capacities of an ordinary person. Moreover, being the attractive and praiseworthy person that he is, he typifies many of the qualities people imagine would be desirable in all leaders. My belief, however, is that while he is a highly capable and sensitive man, his leadership encompasses far more than him as an individual; the people of the country have played a significant role in creating the possibility for him to play his role. The relationship between him and the country is intricately connected. He has come into his role because of the South African country with its particular history and its readiness for his leadership at that specific moment in time.

This unfolding story has great value: it is one with which I am personally familiar and affected by, and it provides the strands that I see as intrinsic to developing and expanding a conception of leadership that challenges an authoritarian, hierarchical and egotistical notion which may be held.

These include:

- The years in South Africa preceding Mandela's leadership were fraught with pain, doubt and struggles. Real change involves painful and difficult processes.
- Countless people and groups, constituting a multitude of small and large acts of courage, all contributed to the leadership that Mandela represents.
- Leadership is much more than something controlled by one person- it represents a shared dreaming.
- Leadership emerged out of that situation and was not imposed onto it.
- Extensive preparations over many years were carried out by Mandela and the people. This long and arduous task is romantically captured only in retrospect.
- Behaviour change is a reflection of an underlying dreaming; the latter is forgotten in the drama of the action. This cannot be simply imposed on a situation – it emerges out of a larger group process.
- It is easier to see the dream in retrospect.
- Business/corporate leaders are fundamentally well placed for effecting change that can benefit the world. These professionals led the way with many of the changes implemented.

This was a huge event of change and leadership. Yet there is a kind of intimacy to it, for the leadership that was embodied by Mandela subtly touches everyone. The very nature of being touched implies a relationship with or between oneself and the leadership. An ironic aspect of this process is that whilst this change and leadership could not have been anticipated, in its manifestation it is recognisable as being almost obvious. Because it was the manifestation of such a broadly felt dream, it is as though the changes that eventuated were enabled rather than directed by the leadership concerned. Nothing has been forced, and yet change has transpired. Senge in *The Dance of Change* refers to this kind of change as being profound change for profound literally means 'a movement towards the fundamental' (Senge 1999, p.15) where the emphasis is on both inner and outer changes. These cannot be easily quantified or predictable.

## **The question of leadership in change**

Where does this kind of leadership come from? Who is responsible for it? What is it, really? These are big questions that invite more of a speculative response than aim for definite answers. The asking itself is a soulful activity and these questions offer the possibility of a more soulful approach to leadership.<sup>8</sup> But what is meant by soul or soulful? Hillman (1992, p.xvi) offers the following psychological understanding of soul and soul-making activity:

*By soul I mean, first of all, a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint towards things rather than a thing itself. This perspective is reflective; it mediates events and makes differences between ourselves and everything that happens. Between events, between the doer and the deed, and us there is a reflective moment – and soul-making means differentiating this middle ground.*

A logical step needs to be taken here. It is as follows: When profound change happens and it is found to resonate with those who are affected by it, the possibility exists that it was already in the field or in the *dreaming* of those people. As Yeats expresses: 'It is dreams that lift us to the flowing, changing world that the heart longs for' (cited Moss 1996, p.33)

Both the terms dreaming and leadership are burdened by their connotations. I intend to offer a somewhat fresher approach to each of them and show how they complement one another. I will show that leadership without the dreaming component is actually out of touch with reality; furthermore, the way to people's inner leadership is through their dreaming.<sup>9</sup>

### **Towards open-mindedness**

I have introduced several new concepts above. Their fullness and applicability will unfold. Further, I would like to suggest that some of the following ideas and theorising may seem vague and not tightly defined. Much is personal and in formation. These ideas are still on the edges of my own thinking. I notice the ideas maintain fluidity that is identical to the content they describe. My belief is that

<sup>8</sup> Soul or soulful is a form of description that is particularly evocative, psychological but also difficult to define. Hillman (1996) has inspired most of my ideas about soul.

<sup>9</sup> I use the term, inner leadership, in relation to subjective and personally motivated or authored actions of leadership.

excessive clarity and certainty maintain our conceptions of the world in a fixed form and may prevent new ways of understanding, ways that our souls are longing for. I therefore invite you, the reader, to read on with an open mind.

## **From inspiration to personalisation**

Mandela's presidential inauguration in April 1994 was a big occasion, a major event of fairytale proportions, one that the entire world could be moved by and share. Each person and each nation finds their meaning in that event in accordance with what matters most to them. They may wonder what effect this event may have on their part of the world; they may consider its affect on the diamond price, even feel a little envious and wish that their country had such a fine President; they may have their belief in humanity temporarily restored. Their thoughts may even be, 'If this could happen in South Africa, why, it could happen anywhere!' At the time, and for weeks, months and years after, people everywhere have dreamt into Mandela's presidency. Mandela is one of the precious few in the world who has been in a major leadership role and whose leadership has had an inspirational nature. He has touched and continues to touch many people through his actions. I include myself in that list.<sup>10</sup>

But what meaning or substance does this have? The leader is experienced as a hero figure, someone separate from oneself. The terms 'we are touched', 'he is inspirational' or 'he is so brave' remain as ideas or idealisations. The business of 'touching' is romantic and flimsy. It is insufficient to simply think about or glamorise his qualities. The leader, in his visible role, holds the potential to awaken the inner leader that is dormant within oneself.<sup>11</sup> However, it requires a more conscious and active dreaming into the particular qualities and a creative action for any actual change to transpire within oneself because of another person's influence. The creative value of the inspiration that someone can offer comes through the reflection on and personalizing what and how those qualities

<sup>10</sup> This is borne out when I run workshops on leadership and invite people to volunteer the names of leaders who have inspired them. The name Mandela is usually on the list.

<sup>11</sup> I use the masculine voice since I am using Mandela as the example in this case.

that are admired, manifest or do not manifest themselves in one's own life.<sup>12</sup> That is, in order to take on the mantle of leadership oneself, it requires a shift in one's thinking from admiration of something outside of oneself to integration within oneself so that the origin of action derives from oneself. However, this is not how the effects of leadership are generally conceptualised.

## **Distancing and awakening**

Copious books and articles have been and continue to be written on the subject of leadership. The notion of leadership is widely researched. So many people claim to understand, to know and to show others what it requires to be an effective leader. The ingredients needed to lead are spoken of with clarity and a carefully considered logic. The assumption is made that leadership can be neatly defined, wrapped up and packaged. Formulations are stated where the attributes of effective leadership are prescriptive and generic. If one takes the leadership of Mandela as an example, it is surely quite easy to note the many qualities of leadership that appear to shine out of Mandela's portfolio of capacities. The tendency among writers and change agents is to carefully examine the particular qualities that Mandela reflects, and then to extrapolate from him (and maybe a few other leaders) to arrive at conclusions about what leadership is and therefore what is needed for someone to be a leader. This very mechanistic way of thinking continues to dominate the current literature on leadership and will be further considered in Chapter 5.

Peter Block (1998), author and co-founder of a new school for managing, argues that as a concept, leadership is a distraction from the meaning and the value of an inner leadership. The creation of a hero figure is like creating a god. With a god, comes the possibility and conditions for also creating the devil. Although he does not state as such, it appears that the devil is the denial of what he calls peer

<sup>12</sup> I believe that the qualities that we admire in another are only useful insofar as they are personalised and their particular manifestation in our own lives understood. My supposition here is that we project onto another what we long for in our own lives. However, there is energy in this projection if it is applied and reflected on in relation to the self.

accountability and civic engagement.<sup>13</sup> The very attraction to the term leadership goes against the authentic change and transformation being sought. The concept takes people outside of their selves and into the world of others, those on the stage as leaders at the time. Leadership is thereby couched in terms that keep their distance from people's direct experience: its place is comfortable in the authority of the intellect or the abstract. Perhaps it even bears resemblance to the way love is often thought of. It is dreamed of, generalized, idealized and written about but kept at arm's length. Brilliant ideas, even poetry, are generated but they are maintained as ideas.

Further developing this contrast between maintaining ideas at a distance and awakening to one's own capacities, psychoanalyst Carl Jung speaks of people's capacity to admire others rather than bringing their own gold. His language is couched in psychological terms when he emphasises that people sterilize themselves by casting off their own shadows.<sup>14</sup> Hillman (1992) also draws on Jung to emphasize our love of hero-worship. He continues with the penetrating idea that it is easier to get the skeletons out of the closet than it is to get gold out of the shadow. People are more frightened of their nobility than they are of their dark sides. They project their gold out onto others, anyone else, which is why they indulge in hero-worship.

Worshipping or simply admiring others maintains a safe distance from self-examination. In that admiration, there is a source and therefore, the potential or energy for recognising the projection.<sup>15</sup> That admiration comes from within an individual and in order to get the gold out of the projection, the uncomfortable act of self-reflection and ownership of the projection is required. This implies the willingness to be the author of one's thoughts and take the concomitant responsibility that comes with authorship or personal authority. The implication

<sup>13</sup> He is arguing that our lifestyle is getting progressively more isolationist in its structure and the lack of community results in individuals not taking citizenship responsibilities. This in turn leads to greater isolation and total trust is placed in the hands of leaders.

<sup>14</sup> The 'shadow' is here taken as the darker or unlit aspects of oneself. This is not saying that these are negative aspects, but rather that they are unexamined parts of oneself (Bly 1988).

<sup>15</sup> A projection is the process of attributing a quality onto another without realising that the origin of the attribution also carries that quality.



here is that each person has the capacity and the responsibility to take back or own their projections and thereby awaken to themselves. I think of this capacity as being a reflection of personal or inner leadership. Owning ones projection is consistent with the oft-quoted lines incorrectly attributed to Mandela:

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our Darkness, that most frightens us.*<sup>16</sup>

Theodore Zeldin, Oxford scholar and member of the European Academy and a fervent advocate for conversation, agrees with this idea when he says the imitation of heroes has always been feeble. He suggest that real heroism happens when two people engage in conversation for therein lies a journey of creativity and discovery.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, in this kind of engagement, each person brings their own inner leadership to bear. I want to explore further and examine more deeply what is meant by this term, inner leadership and how it might be manifest in action.

## **Leadership with spirit**

*In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted.*

C G Jung (1977, p.325)

When Mandela was incarcerated on Robben Island, he had no role of leadership.<sup>18</sup> In spite of this, he maintained a consistent capacity for flexibility, resourcefulness and creativity in creating improved conditions for all the inmates. There are many examples of this including: developing a relationship with his cell warden; making Robben Island a place of study; risking smuggling out his writings in order to continue the work of the ANC; his discipline in personal well-being; and a continuous uncompromising dedication to the South African cause beyond his

<sup>16</sup> These words are said to be part of Mandela's inaugural speech but are not. It is interesting how they have been misquoted and attributed to him; quite feasibly as he could have said them. They are in fact from Williamson (1992). The correction is alluded to on the web site included with the reference.

<sup>17</sup> Theodore Zeldin, author of *An Intimate History of Humanity* (1994) is a well-known historian and advocator of conversational processes. These ideas come from a lecture of his that I attended at Sydney University, August 1998.

<sup>18</sup> Robben Island is the island a few kilometres from Cape Town where Mandela and other activists were incarcerated for nearly 25 years

sphere. Surely most people would have succumbed to the constraints of the situation and become a dispirited victim. My belief is that he maintained an inner strength and faith through the small acts he performed. He also thus maintained the spirit to continue his work.

### **Inspired and embodied<sup>19</sup>**

People discuss leadership and conduct intelligent workshops on this subject without feeling affected. They remain unchanged, maintaining the comfort of their known ways of operating. By maintaining these divisions, people speak of things without feeling them or noticing what happens in their bodies while they do.

Inspired means imbued with spirit. Spirit is breath, life or force. William James (cited Bly 1988, p.70), philosopher and father of American psychology, discussed how the spiritual and the sensual aspects of relating tend to part company. This is reflected in human behaviour and reflects a social mindset. It is generally thought preferable to keep the thinking about our spirituality apart from and not sullied by the sensual, the experiential.

To be inspired is to allow the breath, the idea, the meaning to penetrate into one's body. It is to take things into oneself, to question oneself and enable oneself, as substance, to be embodied. This is what it means to be inspired. Leadership has nothing to do with attending conferences or courses on leadership, unless one gets inspired. Leadership is not about what one knows or how much one knows; it is what one embodies and thereby expresses in oneself. Inspiration moves one to action. The spirit is driven to express itself.

I am not trying to invoke the deity in speaking of spirit. To illustrate my meaning, most of the dictionary definitions of 'inspired' point to the idea of being 'imbued with' and then motivated to act.<sup>20</sup> It is a complex word to define; therefore most definitions are in terms of action examples:

<sup>19</sup> Capra (2002, p.43) says 'The experiential state is always "embodied", that is, embedded in a particular field of sensation'. He explains the state of being embodied is when one's experience is coloured by a dominant sensation.

<sup>20</sup> This dictionary reference is found on the web at <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=inspired>

- To affect, guide, or arouse by divine influence.
- To fill with enlivening or exalting emotion: *hymns that inspire the congregation; an artist who was inspired by Impressionism.*
  - To stimulate to action; motivate: *a sales force that was inspired by the prospect of a bonus.*
  - To affect or touch: *The falling leaves inspired her with sadness.*
- To draw forth; elicit or arouse: *a teacher who inspired admiration and respect.*
- To be the cause or source of; bring about: *an invention that inspired many imitations.*
- To draw in (air) by inhaling.
- Archaic.
  - To breathe on.
  - To breathe life into.

Inspiration or inspired action reflects a personal and creative relationship with the world. It appears to come from an individual who is acting from an inner directedness. This grasp of the world reflects an imaginative action that is directed by a kind of dreaming. I would like now to explore and demystify this somewhat imaginative term in order to understand how it may relate to leadership.

## **Dreaming and its discounting**

Peculiarly, dreams are both discounted and valued by society, almost concurrently. ‘Interesting - but it’s just a dream’ is a frequently heard response to both those perplexing nighttime events and ironically, to any ideas that seem a bit far fetched. These ideas are then put aside, and other than a momentary discomfort faintly noticed, life continues as before. At the same time, nighttime dreams are generally considered to contain wisdom, albeit just out of reach. To speak about people’s dreams (nighttime or vague ideas) is always tainted with uncertainty, with doubt and even a little fear. It is as though people believe in their wisdom but their revelation is inaccessible and exploring them could be seen as trespassing an invisible boundary. Ideas that do not fit into the ‘easy to understand’ mould, are often discounted as useless or just ‘dreamy’. The world of the dream is therefore just beyond the conscious grasp. It has a just out of reach, unattainable nature.

The 'big dream' in South Africa was little spoken of until it was within arm's reach. It was somehow too far removed, perhaps too difficult for people to imagine its eventual appearance. The dream was therefore marginalized; coping, frustration and complaining were mainstream.<sup>21</sup>

But I want to expand and broaden the notion of the dreaming. I will begin with the premise that the world is continually in creation, it is never complete but is forever evolving and taking shape. The world is dreaming itself into being.<sup>22</sup> Like a great and overwhelmingly enormous world consciousness, creation is in creation; even now, even at the next moment. Through each person's small, limited consciousnesses, they participate in, help to create and are affected by the unfolding dreaming that moves creation along.<sup>23</sup> The unfolding dream can be seen to have its own self-perpetuating power.

World-famous Process Oriented Psychology practitioner Arnold Mindell, has followed and developed Jung's ideas about the unconscious and the active imagination. Whereas depth psychology has a strict division between the conscious and the unconscious realms, Mindell (2000) sees these two realms as fluidly interconnecting, each feeding into the other. Normal day-to-day reality is the consensual reality. This is a known region of experience. It is a mutually understood and defined reality with clear edges and boundaries. Most daily operating is carefully maintained and lived within these known boundaries. People wear various hats to suit the different roles and situations in which they find themselves. In this arena, diversity and difference of opinions separate people from one another. However, just outside or over these edges, is the dreaming or the sentient reality. It can be imagined as pictures of states that are trying to happen. It includes the place from which nighttime dreams come. It is a vast arena of possible consciousness. Referred to as 'lucid dreaming', it is unexpectedly accessible to the awake consciousness.

<sup>21</sup> Mainstream is a way of describing well-understood or generalised ideas or behaviours. This is an opposite of marginal.

<sup>22</sup> This conceptualisation of the dreaming is resonant with Australian Aboriginal and American Indian spirituality and appears to be increasingly gaining more general western credibility.

<sup>23</sup> This is my understanding of creation.

## **Between the known and the dreaming**

The ongoing business of doing and being is the continual process of the sentient level or the dreaming, expressing itself in the consensual reality. This is like the surface level of human reality. The edge can be considered as an invisible boundary between 'consensual reality' and the dreaming. It defines the self, with the limits of self-concepts and capacities. Like a filter to perception, it protects and maintains habitual experience. It maintains consistency of identity. When one comes to an edge, one loses one's clear perceptions and one may get confused. Something else is there, but one cannot get a full awareness of it (Mindell 1992). The skill of using the dreaming or the sentient reality is the capacity to appreciate what is happening below the surface, outside of the obvious events that are occurring. This vast realm also includes the magical, the connections between all things, the irrational experiences that one would usually ignore, the unconscious dream-like movements, the accidents and slips of the tongue. How does one access this dream state and yet still be awake and conscious?

Just as the nighttime dream is a report of a deep process that is occurring, body sensations or momentary thoughts that seem to be unexplained and unpredictable are part of the dreaming process (Mindell 1993, p.21). The theoretical basis for the ideas of process-oriented psychology, also called dreambody work, is that by being attentive to the experience, and in particular the body sensations within experience, and allowing experience to direct the action of living, people recover their wholeness and become 'the agent of personal growth' Goodbread (1987, p.13). It sounds quite straightforward. However, whilst people have experience, consciousness is not tuned into the more subtle body sensations, momentary doubts or fleeting thoughts that are aspects of experience. These are not quite in the conscious world of experience; rather they exist on the edges of what is generally known and consensually agreed.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> I use the word, world, in relation to the idea that different levels of reality are like many parallel worlds. The majority of time, we operate in a unitary world of consensual reality that serves the business of doing and coexisting. But there are other worlds of undercurrents, emotions and then more spiritual beings that require a conscious effort to access.

In a breakthrough book on leadership by Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer and Flowers, called *Presence*, the authors go to great lengths to show how habitual thoughts tend to shape people's basic experiences, beliefs and sense of self (Senge et al. 2004). They argue that it requires the very active and conscious processes of shifting and stopping the usual or everyday awareness in order for the consciousness to penetrate into our deeper experience. Their idea of deeper experience is what I refer to as the dreaming. Inevitably, people avoid the discomfort that results from this realm of experience by careful analysis and organisation. As Margaret Wheatley, accomplished organisational author describes: 'We take the complexity of human life and organise it away. It is not part of the story we want to believe' (Wheatley 1998, p.343). She too is referring to the relative ease of maintaining the self in the realm of habitual experience, without deeper personal reflection and without inviting the dreaming into personal experience. However, I wish to consider how the dreaming or deeper experience manifests itself in order to appreciate how it can be accessible.

### **Considering the dreaming**

The dreaming becomes all that which exists below or just before or outside of our state of clear-minded consciousness (Mindell 1998). There are hints of its presence from:

- The quality of consciousness remembered from sleep
- That which makes its presence felt by a momentary glance, a thought, a doubt
- That which people have an intuition about, but not a fully formed conceptualisation
- A sensing, an unformed idea
- An uncomfortable feeling without knowing the reason why
- Something outside of conscious perception realms
- Ideas preceded by uncertain words like 'just' or 'only' as people shy away from them
- Those moments that people step outside the busy-ness and the 'doing' and step into a receptive mode.

These hints fleetingly emerge and then the world seems to move on. Their presence assumes a world that is emerging, continuously in creation. Being in touch with this level of consciousness places one in a position to respond to what is arising. Brian Arthur, a writer and noted economist of the Santa Fe Institute, says in an interview with Scharmer, colleague of Senge: 'Every profound innovation is based on an inward-bound journey, on going to a deeper place where knowing comes to the surface'<sup>25</sup> Many current corporate thinkers such as Block (1998), Heifetz (2002) debate similar ideas. Greenleaf speaks of the future as something that is being created at every moment. It is not something that is simply 'out there' but can be brought into the present through the capacity to be conscious of what is unfolding in each moment (Greenleaf 1998, p.19). He says that each person has this capacity but it takes a particular stance of intention and the courage to enable it.

Jaworski, another author on leadership and colleague of Senge, expresses the creative impulse beautifully by saying, 'We participate in creating the future, not by trying to impose our will on it, but by deepening our collective understanding of what wants to emerge in the world, and then having the courage to do what is required' Jaworski (1998, p.266). I believe that he is referring to the courage to consider and name what is subtly or faintly noticed; things that are outside the mainstream; that which seems to go against the tide of opinion. The very act of naming brings the unspeakable into a form that can now be addressed. I would like to give an example of collective understanding or active dream work from a recent experience that I had with an organisation.

### **Case example of work with dreaming**

A group of social facilitators had been working together for many months but the members had recently become increasingly aware of some discomfort within the

<sup>25</sup> Brian Arthur is an innovative thinker who has had a profound influence on the thinking and development of ideas of Senge, who frequently references Arthur's ideas. Scharmer is a thinker and writer whose interests and influences on his thinking on organisational change are extremely similar to my own including Francisco Varela and Goethe through Bortoft (1996). It may appear that I have taken many ideas from him and yet, this is a case of synchronicity and serendipity. Scharmer's Arthur was one of Scharmer's first interviewees in his project interviewing leaders on their ideas on leadership and change. These make fascinating reading and are available on [www.dialogonleadership.org](http://www.dialogonleadership.org).

group. This was said to be affecting their capacity to move forward on the various projects and commitments they had to complete. I was invited to work with them. I was told that something was holding the group back but no one could isolate an actual problem, yet the group were unproductive and this had led to great dissatisfaction and some anger. A few hours was set aside to work for a facilitated group process.

The group sat around a large board table. After initial introductions, I explained and created the conditions for a dialogue or group process where the invitation was made to simply mention feelings and thoughts that emerged. These were feelings that were in response to what others said or even random thoughts and feelings that arose. Debate, discussion or argument was discouraged. The intention was not to be right or wrong about the issues, but to identify the issues.

Ideas and feelings were aired and not analysed. Each person spoke about their own feelings without having to justify their feelings. Frequently, uncomfortable feelings about their colleagues arose. When judgements did arise, these were noticed by naming them as judgements. They could then be put aside. Hours were spent noticing and naming the many feelings. This dialogue became a dreaming space; without justification or explanations, feelings could be told and be heard.

Towards the end of the time together, the feeling present in the group was described as sobering. A space was created in the group that was somehow clearer. People said that in the conscious noticing of each individual, something quite different had been given the opportunity to emerge. From that sentient place, a new dreaming together into the future began. It appeared to be considerate and conscious of what was needed by each of the participants as well as by the group. Suggestions for the future were shared. The process was delicate, respectful and cohesive. After our session, the participants engaged in business planning; they later reported an ease of operation due to a different awareness. The shared dreaming appeared to have helped ease tensions and make ready a path ahead or a readiness to move forward together. It is almost impossible to name the exact ingredients of what had changed or taken place.



## Creation

Every statement made; every thought that is thought; every action taken; is a reflection of an underlying process or the *dreaming*. This creative process is continuously taking place, seemingly in spite of people's potential blocking. Scientist John Wheeler, currently Professor Emeritus of Princeton University in New Jersey, says that the universe is constantly in a process of looking at itself; constantly in a process of creating itself but never able to fully know itself (cited Barrow et al 2004). This reminds me of the ancient Sufi hadith (words of God) that says: *I was a hidden treasure and I longed to be known, so I created the world that I may be known.*<sup>26</sup>

These ideas, almost identical, from a western scientist and from a mystic, point to the process of creation as a kind of continuous longing or loving. They speak of the hidden and then the revealed and the journey between the two as a process of longing. The inner world has a longing to be known.<sup>27</sup> The inner world speaks in a different language - often a whisper, an allusion, a hint, a signal, a dream. It is often accompanied by a slight discomfort. Perhaps that discomfort acts as a wake-up call; perhaps that is a way of alerting people to its presence. Mostly, these vague sensations and thoughts are ignored and thus the accustomed states of consciousness and ways of operating and understanding continue. The cost is that the habitual modes of functioning in the world are maintained and change is resisted, for it is not understood.

<sup>26</sup> These words come through the mystic Ibnul Arabi, author of the *Fusus al Hikam*, which is an esoteric commentary on the Koran. I have known them for over thirty years and cannot remember where I first saw them. They are profound words that require great contemplation to appreciate their nuances and depth.

<sup>27</sup> Whilst one may assert an inner world and an outer world, this is more a symbolic reference to two points along a spectrum of consciousness.

## **Dreaming and Creation**

If thoughts are like the tip of the iceberg, where the iceberg itself is the dreaming, then these thoughts can be considered as pointers or indicators of what is trying to express itself or come through into consciousness.<sup>28</sup> Bly (1988, p.48) argues that perceptions are reflectors of their origin. Holding the theory that the universe is in a constant state of creating itself, that which is noticed is simply a reflection of what is trying to come into expression through a deeper consciousness. My hypothesis is that until people notice and invite their conscious thoughts to emerge as indicators, they keep themselves in the world of the habitual or the sameness with fixed beliefs and strong ideas about matters. This is the consensual reality, the place of diversity. People can assert all the principles and well-versed ideas about leadership, but remain blind to what is lurking below, to what the deeper experience may actually be saying. These may include the contradictions, the doubts, the fears, and other internal blocks that we sustain and prevent us from embracing our more creative capacities.

Ken Wilber (cited Moss 1998, p.2) insists that ‘until the full spectrum of knowing is acknowledged, the full spectrum of being - the comprehensive world view - will likewise remain hidden’. Inspirational leadership is about finding the means of people expressing the fullness of their humanity, through drawing on all aspects of the knowing and dreaming realms.

<sup>28</sup> These ideas come from notes taken at a workshop with Mindell, Byron Bay, 1998. This idea is frequently discussed by modern physicists who are in the forefront of acknowledging the possibilities of awareness to operate in a far larger field than usually realised.

## Conclusions

*In its original state, the soul was feathered all over. So now it is all in a state of ferment and throbbing; in fact the soul of a man who is beginning to grow feathers has the same sensations of pricking and irritation and itching as children feel in their gums when they are just beginning to cut their teeth.*

Plato, from Phaedrus (cited Moss 1998, p.1)

I began this chapter speaking about a big leader and a big dream; I end on a somewhat humbler note. By bringing the understanding of leadership out of the general and into the particular of each person's experience, people can come face to face with themselves. It takes courage to pay attention; to allow oneself to dream into the unfamiliar; to feel the doubts and the fears and to respect their presence too. I believe that significant change requires imagination, perseverance, dialogue, deep caring and a willingness to change on the part of millions of people. That is what happened in South Africa.

I believe that another such revolution is currently transpiring worldwide, as growing numbers of people are increasingly willing to open themselves to their creative potential and grapple with the discomfort that it carries. How each person is inspired into action is a reflection of their leadership dreaming.

My wish is that with time and further research and reflection, the combination of leadership and dreaming will become a partnership. Together they foster understanding and a deepening awareness of the potential of a person and what they could best be doing. Leadership, without the dreaming, stagnates in the past. The partnership of leadership and dreaming can provide a way of stepping consciously into the present and improving the future.

## Chapter 6

### Leadership – by the book

#### Background

The kind of organisational leadership that has given rise to an effective and successful organisation in the past decades is no longer considered useful. This is the message of almost every book on leadership published in the past three decades. The major questions asked nowadays struggle to make sense of what this new leadership needs to look like. Many reasons are given for the emergence of this change but most include the increasing impact of globalisation and the technological advances in communication systems. Decisions need to be made more rapidly than in the past decades, often with less information available than a rational and considered opinion requires. Decision-making and the capacity for looking ahead is the basis for the frequently made differentiation between management and leadership.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) in *The Leadership Challenge* discuss how traditional management refers to an older style of leadership where stability and orderliness were organisational necessities; where short-term financial goals were paramount; where the leader had to be charismatic and magnetically lead the followers; where cool, analytical and detached were the desirable emotional modalities; where only those in the top positions were the leaders who took the decisions, a role reserved for the very few. The articulation of what the new leadership looks like and how it can operate in small and large organisations continues to be contentious.

Thousands of new opinions are being offered each year.

## **Introduction**

Phenomenologist and author Donald Polkinghorne describes the importance of three sources of information in a phenomenological inquiry: self-reflection, data from other participants, and data from previously developed descriptions like published literature (Polkinghorne 1989, p.46). In this chapter, my intention is to use various organisational literary sources to capture some of the central tensions that continue to be contentious in the evolving understanding of leadership.

This chapter is not intended to offer a comprehensive analysis of all the issues surrounding leadership. There is a wealth of information available on the 'how-to' of leadership. I avoid this as it is prescriptive and assumes the generalisability of the skills of leadership. I continue to focus on the particularity and the individuality of leadership. I have chosen those issues that challenge basic assumptions of leadership as an experience at this time in our culture. The particular demands on organisations in relation to the larger financial and world environment inform the nature of current leadership, and I therefore include an examination of some of the Western cultural assumptions surrounding leadership.

The topics considered in this chapter are informed by questions about leadership that arose out of the research completed in chapters 2, 3 & 4. In that research, I noticed that position or status did not determine the leadership experience of individuals, the commitment to the organisation or the expression of particular principles and values. It was clear that leadership is an expression that could arise from any part of the organisation. It was also clear that the research process enabled the opportunity for greater leadership expression to occur through the hearing of the multitude of voices.

I therefore consider questions around the search for leadership including positional and personal leadership, leadership and followership, individuality, the learning of leadership, transformational leadership, leadership and the impact of the consultancy industry, and visionary leadership. The calling for leadership has grown as a response to managing a world that seems increasingly subject to major changes. This chapter is a precursor to Chapter 7 where the intrinsic relationship

of leadership with change will be reviewed. In the sections ahead, I sift through the current organisational literature for the major issues and capture a selection of the more contentious leadership issues and tensions. I examine how these contribute to an evolving understanding of leadership.

## **The calling for leadership**

The quantity of literature emerging on the topic of leadership at this time seems inexhaustible. This indicates a need that is perhaps closer to a hunger for 'good enough' leadership. Whilst the people's concern appears to be mostly felt in relation to business, it also includes politics and other organisational life. This calling is stronger now than ever before and the question arises why in these times people are calling for leadership so loudly. Are people seeking a particular form of leadership? Are they longing for more meaningful leadership? Howard Gardner (1995) suggests that the constant calling for leadership has become something of an incantation in the Western mind, but that people have almost forgotten what they are seeking.

In reaction to the many leadership and change packages in the market place, Block (1998, p.88) notices: 'The question of leadership that began as a search for spirit and vision has now been commodified. We operate as if leadership can be packaged and thereby be sold and then purchased'.<sup>1</sup> He describes his amazement at consumers' willingness to purchase each new management or leadership fad that comes onto the market. He claims that the strong desires for the latest leadership tools is based on the belief that humans now live in a time of great social change and unless they purchase these, they will be left behind or simply fail. He contends that this is a false belief that has confused speed with transformation. People can certainly exchange information faster but this has not led to any change in how human effort is organised, which he says, continues to vest entitlement in those at the top of the ladder. The individual seeks safety and comfort from the leader and does not take responsibility or feel accountable for

<sup>1</sup> Block has been the author of three best selling books on leadership. He is also the founder of a management school, the first Distinguished Consultant-in-Residence at Xavier University and has more than 25 years experience in organisational change (Spears 1998).

societal or organisational control or outcomes. This perpetuates passivity in the individual and an ongoing need for the leader and for leadership. The constant call for leadership is a reflection of a society where individual citizenship and a readiness to be accountable are marginalized.

These ideas were borne out in the case study shown in Chapters 2, 3 & 4, with an interesting twist. Not only did those in the lower ranks of the organisation call for better leadership from those in the positions of leadership, but also management complained about those in the designated ranks not taking appropriate responsibility and leadership. Both the management and staff were calling for the other to take up their leadership more adequately. The blame took place behind backs as neither group communicated their need for support. This recognisable situation results in the interminable 'they' as in 'they are the problem'. Concurrently, it includes the avoidance of the part played by the 'we' in creating this blame situation, forgetting how relationships are a field of forces, each group holding the other in obeisance in its role.

The literature being published responds to various forms of leadership heeds. Gardner (1995) explains how official leaders, already in position, wish to find out how to become better leaders. Those not in leadership positions complain bitterly about the dearth of adequate leaders. Still others seek advice about how to become leaders. It appears that leadership is sought as a panacea for all social problems. Consequently, the expectations placed on leadership have become inordinately high. The magnitude of what is being sought promises magical solutions, with the goal of leadership being as mysterious as the Holy Grail or the meaning of life itself.

This chapter will examine the literature to understand and appreciate both what is being called for and the nature of the calling. I will begin with some open observations about the sheer volume of the literature and then tease apart a number of tensions with which the literature is grappling. I will end with emergent observations and conclusions that carry over to the next chapter.

## **The drive towards leadership**

The alchemist's search for gold is marked less by the finding or the creating of gold than by the remarkable journey of discovery. In this review of the literature on leadership, it is fascinating to describe and examine the search for leadership, for perhaps the golden goal of leadership will be located in the quest itself.

An observation that I find of particular interest is the change in the nature of the literature on leadership over the last decade. In the past most of the books about leadership were prescriptive and took the form of 'how to' achieve excellence in leadership or management. The rules for achieving this were clearly delineated so that if one followed each step, one was guaranteed success. There was a certainty and definiteness about what was needed in order to be a leader.

I notice that this has shifted to a mode of writing that questions the meaning of leadership and openly inquires and wonders about the topic. A further shift has occurred from espousing definiteness about the behaviour and training required for leadership to questioning whether training is even possible; from telling the way to manage leadership to inspiring the reader with compelling stories that are sometimes personal in nature. The language used has also changed. A vast proportion of these writings have titles and topics that focus on the realms of the spirit, the soul or the heart. They often bear little resemblance to the usual organisational writings. They seem to describe more about a manner of being than a specific way of doing a job. Emotions are not only shied away from, rather they are now encouraged and considered essential for understanding personal leadership. The telling of experiences that are inexplicable in the usual formal organisational language, are not avoided. Stories about little, ordinary life things are often used to put the big strategic directions ideas across. The language used has expanded to include words like servant, synchronicity, meaning, heart, soul, spirit, stewardship, dreaming, calling, inner and passion. What is going on? How can such concepts possibly have relevance for the very concrete goals and strategic directions that are constantly being demanded of the leader in organisations in these times? Why have the writings about leadership changed in these directions at a time when more than ever is demanded from a leader, and at a time when the demands of organisations are more pressing than they have ever



been? I would like to keep these many questions and observations alive throughout the discussion that follows.

## **Leadership, environment and the world stage**

*Clearly business has the capacity to play an innovative leadership role in creating a positive, sustainable future.*

Brutoco (cited Ray & Rinzler 1993, p.xii)

Brutoco was the founder of the World Business Academy in California and argues that of all social institutions at this time in history, it is business that wields the greatest power and energy globally. It is business, therefore, that has the power to facilitate the solutions for many of the human challenges that it currently faces. Many multinational corporations control a higher turnover than some countries and continue to grow and expand in size and control, their influence on environmental and social outcomes being profound. Business has, at least in part, been responsible for the explosion of material wealth of the industrialised nations over the past fifty years.

The same system has also wrought major concerns for the planet. The extent to which blame for causing the many problems can be placed on business is not the debate but it can be said that it is suicidal for both business and the environment to continue the same vein of developmental growth regardless of the problems. With the exploding rates of human population and the struggle for the limited natural resources of the earth; with a fragile ecological system and increasing amounts of waste and pollution, an urgency of need has fallen on the shoulders of the business sector in the world. This is quite clearly expressed on the global front where multinational corporations translate those challenges facing society, many becoming its trustees. Issues related to ethics, sustainability and the community consequences of actions have gained ground with many more publications in the last decade.

Ironically, with the huge challenges facing business to cope in a rapidly changing industrial environment, with a global economy demanding increasing competitiveness, and with the pressures of a most precarious natural environment,

the need for leadership to manage and thrive is greater than ever. In spite of the magnitude of these needs and the far-reaching impact required, a growing school of thought considers leadership to be about managing oneself and the people within the organisation. Lewin and Regine (1999) call relationships, rather than finance, the new bottom line for business. Popular leadership author Covey (1998) says it is actually the incredible demand to thrive in such a marketplace that makes the effectiveness of every one of the employees become more vital than ever. He considers that the only way this may succeed is through the sustained empowerment of the people in the organisation. This will only be achieved within a culture where employees feel supported and trusted, and an 'empowerment philosophy that turns bosses into servants and coaches' (Covey 1998, p.xi).

Increasingly the organisational literature stresses the importance of appreciating the full impact of the human potential within an organisation. Leadership gurus including Senge, Covey, Heifetz, Mintzberg, De Pree et al, advocate and extend the ideas put forward by Greenleaf, who first wrote about servant leadership over fifty years ago (Covey 1998). Sustainability and the consideration of the environment, translates into a consideration of the individuals who work in the organisation. In order for the collective to thrive, each of the parts needs sustenance. Similarly, for the global market, it is essential to serve the needs of all peoples such that each one grows and in turn does the same to assist others. This increasingly indicates that good leadership creates leadership amongst members of the company; as a pervasive atmosphere develops that affects each employee.

### **Each leader is a unique story**

*Leading Minds*, by Howard Gardner (1995), offers a psychological insight into leadership through offering the stories of many leaders. It has become a best seller and is frequently referred by leadership writers as they question the value of story towards a deepening understanding of leadership. Jaworski (1996) presented his popular leadership book, *Synchronicity: the inner path of leadership* as a personal narrative which traces the author's life journey and describes his processes of decision making. Another recent publication on organisational leadership and change, *Presence* (Senge et al. 2004) is presented in narrative format, largely

consisting of the personal anecdotes of the four authors. Whilst stories and narratives have been told from time immemorial, why are stories making such an impression on the world of business?

Postmodern philosopher, Richard Rorty, explains that narrative offers the path to solidarity and compassionate action more effectively than explanations or books theorising on ethical behaviour. Telling a story offers a way of inspiring and touching the reader or listener and imbuing thereby a lived sense of the narrator's experience and motivation. It also respects the personal integrity of the listener by sharing a story rather than explaining how to behave (Rorty 1989).

I believe story has taken on this popularity because of the recognition of the very personal nature of leadership. Each story is unique and each is a continued attempt to redefine and individualise the meaning of effective leadership. Personal stories are used to show how particular (and new) ways of thinking about leadership have evolved. Jaworski (1996) shows the leadership evolution in his life.

Similarly, Howard Gardner showcases a number of leadership stories from organisational personalities, as well as scientists and politicians. These biographical stories are inspiring to read. They offer the reader an experience through the reading. Each leader is presented as a unique identity, with their personal challenges, weaknesses and victories. They do not attempt to prescribe a particular way of being or becoming a leader. The authors may not refer to their own life stories in leadership terms. What becomes significant is less information about their leadership than that each leader had been able to communicate their vision in ways that are audible to their audience. Therefore, Gardner says, a leader has to be clear about their identity as well as those of the group with whom they are communicating. Without this, their story cannot be clearly told and nor, claims Gardner, can their leadership be expressed. He highlights individualistic identity, definable by its differentiation and capacity to be communicated, as the most significant aspect of leadership.

Increasingly, case studies are used as tools for teaching leadership in MBA programs. These afford the learner the opportunity to examine another's life, not to emulate what they have done, but to apply the issues that other leaders were confronted by to their own lives. This establishes a respectful consideration for each person's identity and their ways of operating.

The growing appreciation of story as a way of conveying and expressing leadership in the literature shows the orientation to leadership shifting towards greater respect for an individual way. It reflects the movement from leadership as a causal phenomenon, shown in 'if you do such and such you will be a good leader', to valuing the primary significance of each individual with their particular drives and motivation.

### **Positional leadership and personal leadership**

It is important to distinguish between the practise of leadership and the holding of a leadership position. Generally, people can all name those in high positions who command little respect (and do not warrant the title of leader). Then there are those who can equally be named, who have the knack, without necessarily the leadership platform, to simply take the authority position that is asking to be adopted at precisely the right time. Here leadership is practised without the concomitant formal authority. Senge (cited Webber 1999, p.178) says in an interview called 'Learning for a change':

*The first problem with all of the stuff that's out there about leadership is that we haven't got a clue what we're talking about. We use the word "leader" to mean "executive": The leader is the person at the top. That definition says that leadership is synonymous with a position. And if leadership is synonymous with a position, then it doesn't matter what a leader does. All that matters is where a leader sits. If you define a "leader" as an "executive" then you absolutely deny everyone else in an organisation the opportunity to be a leader.*

Traditionally, leadership roles are granted to extroverts with charisma, to those who happen to know the right people. However, leadership does not exist in isolation: it is part of a system of relationships, such that, when a person holding a position does not have strong leadership capabilities, the people being led will soon feel the deficiencies. The effectiveness of leadership exists only insofar it is

felt as such in the imaginations and the perceptions of the affected parties. Both authority and leadership are built on legitimacy and credibility.

Kouzes (1998, p.323) observes:

*... we keep learning the same thing over and over and over. We keep rediscovering that credibility is the foundation of leadership. It's been reinforced so often that we've come to refer to it as the "First Law of Leadership": People won't believe the message if they don't believe in the messenger. People don't follow your technique. They follow you - your message and your embodiment of that message.*

When the leader loses the legitimacy, they lose the capacity to lead, irrespective of the position held. The obedience to leadership is necessarily a voluntary one.

Legitimacy is a subtle business and less dependant on structure than on the influence of credibility in a mutually fusion of effort in both the leader and the led. The authority for leadership comes from a few sources. A person can be appointed into a position, they can be elected (by the popular vote of the followers) into a position, and/or they can self-authorise their position. It is suggested that a good organisation is one that will encourage leadership from many quarters and from those with or without a leadership position.

Senge (1999) suggests that leadership must come from many parts of the organisation, especially and including line leaders and those community leaders who are natural networkers. This latter group (community) includes those within the organisation who know how to get people talking to one another. They may not have a particular position but everyone knows who they are and how influential their words are.

Bob Gunn (2000, p.2) twists the traditional notion about leadership as belonging only to an elite few. He poses the following challenge:

*But what if we were to assume that leadership is not the scarcest but the most abundant of resources? What if we clearly saw that every person in a company has the potential to see what needs doing and to get it done? We would discover that leadership is not scarce at all, simply overlooked and underdeveloped. Every employee has latent leadership skills and abilities. Superior "leaders" are those who see the abundance of leadership potential and help their organisation harvest it.*

He goes on to mention that the hallmark of a successful company is one that both cultivates and harvests employees' innate leadership. Moreover, in a similar vein, Parker J. Palmer (1998, p.197) in an essay entitled *Leading from Within* says:

*In the last decade or two, we have done a lot of moaning about the lack of moral, humane, and visionary leadership in the public arena. But today, if we have eyes to see, we can look around the world and find those moral, visionary, humane leaders. We can find them in South Africa, we can find them in Latin America, and we can find them in Eastern Europe.*

What Palmer is referring to is not the skills of leadership that manipulate the external world, rather he recognises those who have an inner engagement with themselves and their organisation. They already hold an internalised leadership role but act without outside recognition. They are really practising inner leadership, a capacity that ought to be part of the position of leadership but is not always noticeable. The difference between the two is not easy to recognise. Inner leadership is known by its subtle effect, for it is a capacity to go within oneself and make a difference through a way of behaving. A senior manager involved in the research conducted in the earlier chapters, captured this idea of leading from within, through the following words:

*If we're going to make a change, then we have to be different. We don't have to have a new structure, we don't have to have new titles or anything. But as people, we're going to have to be different.*

These profound words show a dawning preparedness to engage with the inner world of personal leadership with the concomitant realisation that facilitating change and bringing inner leadership into the equation is not dependant on having a platform of leadership.

### **Leadership ... as enabling heart and community**

In his address to the U.S. Congress in 1990, Vaclav Havel spoke of the suffering that his country, Czechoslovakia, had endured over many years of living under a totalitarian system. He suggested that true democracy is an ideal to be aspired to, even for the United States, for whilst the theory may be clearly worked out, the reality of what it means in the treatment of fellow human beings is complex and a constant goal for which to aspire. Moreover, in the long journey his country has endured, he appreciated the lessons he had learnt which apply to the human spirit:

*The specific experience I'm talking about has given me one certainty: consciousness precedes being, and not the other way round as the Marxists claim. For this reason, the salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and in human responsibility. Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in the sphere of our being as human...*

The human heart is central to what is needed for change and progress in human endeavours. The idea of 'consciousness preceding being' points to the unique human capacity to choose its state of consciousness in spite of the constraints of external circumstances. The human side (the heart) must be prioritised even within industrialist and materialist endeavours. This sounds highfalutin, and yet this same message appears with greater urgency in almost every book that is published on the topic of leadership nowadays. Leadership writer and teacher Warren Bennis (1997) says, 'Technologically we are very advanced but psychologically we are babes in the wood. We don't know ourselves or anyone else very well'.

It is evidently a great and complex paradox that businesses and corporations are caught within. On the one hand, organisations are largely designed and have been created to make money for the shareholders. Yet organisations are also communities of people who are daily and intensely interacting with one another. Working within an organisation also involves building relationships, assisting one another and the ongoing wish to make meaningful lives. The idea of finding or creating a business environment that does enable heart to be present is often met with cynicism, as it goes against a basic impulse that people often imagine is the somewhat ruthless and all motivating force for all business endeavours, money. Senge (1999) suggests there can be several motivations, of which financial success is one amongst many. In his latest book, *The Dance of Change*, he warns that when the goals of the organisation do not include people-orientated aspirations, they cannot expect anything more than short-lived success. This reflects the significant paradigm shift that many writers consider is currently taking place in organisational life. The long-term goals of an organisation need to include those within the organisation sharing in these goals.

Senge (cited Webber 1999) characterises the changes transpiring (and increasingly needed) in systemic terms as the movement from a machine model to that of a living system or organism. The machine has operators, controllers (managers) and owners for whom the machine produces income, when it is operating correctly! When it is broken, it gets fixed. As long as the leadership and source of control is maintained only in the hands of the top management or CEO, the remainder of the workforce follows in a pattern of compliance. There is no possibility for developing their leadership. Their sole commitment is to serve the leader, rather than serving the system as a significant generative force within the whole. In relation to change processes, the leaders in such a system try to drive change through formal change programs. These are applied coercively and usually begin from the top of the organisation and extend down through the hierarchy.

However, when organisations are seen as a living system, the patterns that exist in the organisation are appreciated as a function of how the individuals within constitute them, or as Senge says, enact them. With this conceptualisation, leadership within the organisation arises as a function of the whole system. The leadership is thereby spread throughout the system and may shift and change as needed. This conceptualisation is considered as both good for business as well as making the workplace into a meaningful space. Arie de Geus (1997), writer and former Shell Executive, goes so far as to recommend that a strong sense of community is actually essential for the survival of business in the complex and turbulent business environment. In a chapter called 'Life and leadership in organisations' from his latest book *The Hidden Connections*, Capra (2002, p.97) continues his reflections on the systemic and living nature of organisations:

*These considerations imply that the most effective way to enhance an organisation's potential for creativity and learning, to keep it vibrant and alive, is to support and strengthen its communities of practice.*

Whilst these ideas of community are different from Havel's plea for the consciousness that honours the place of each individual, I believe it reflects the strong trend towards making workplaces people-orientated environments where individual potential and leadership can emerge more spontaneously.



## Can leadership be taught?

Leadership, as has been discussed, is far more than the bestowal of a position. It inevitably involves taking up the reins of a position, whether it is a formal position or a role being played. Few people take such roles lightly or with much expectation of their abilities. When people do take on leadership too easily, one feels wary that their motivation is for personal power rather than to serve the situation. This leads to suspicion of and even aversion to the leader. However, can leadership be learnt? Can leadership be taught? Are there particular leadership skills? Which leaders are good enough?<sup>2</sup> As will be seen, the decision as to whether leadership can be learnt depends on how leadership is defined.

Hillman defines leadership as a capacity that can be latent until it finds the opportunity to be expressed. Goleman and situational leadership theorists both consider leadership as action already in expression. Hillman (2000), author of *The Soul's Code*, discusses the nature of leadership in an article called 'The Born Leader'. He argues for the idea of leadership as an innate capacity. He uses animals to illustrate his meaning. In any pack of horses or litter of kittens, there will be those individual animals who, for whatever reason, are the ones that will push to the front, get to the food first, are more curious, adventurous or have a more urgent appetite. He reckons this is the same with humans and says that leadership capacity is therefore an innately given propensity.

Whilst those with leadership capacities may often not be offered a leadership position, a natural leader will find their moment to take action or take the initiative. Leadership, he claims, will lie hidden until that time. He states that the power of leadership is the capacity to embody big ideas and to be unafraid of ideals and whilst strong personality traits are given to many people, the expression of ideals is not. He attributes the leadership skills to natural endowment and

<sup>2</sup> The concept of a good-enough leader comes from an article of that name by Samuels (2000). His hypothesis is that the psychological possibility of failure is at the essence of good-enough-ness; either leadership as the art of failing or the inevitable link to failure that comes with maintaining the leader in heroic terms. The concept of a 'good-enough mother' was originated by Psychoanalyst Winnicott, to describe the archetypal mother who inevitably experiences herself as a failure for she can never manage to be 'good-enough'.

names figures such as Simon Bolivar or Lenin as examples of where leadership became actual instruments of history (Hillman 1995).

Goleman, author of the best seller *Emotional Intelligence*, would entirely disagree with Hillman. In a pragmatic, quantitatively researched study, he concludes that leaders can most certainly be made and taught. Observing over 3,000 executives worldwide, he specifies six vital leadership styles that arise out of different aspects of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence means people's ability to manage relationships and themselves effectively. It consists of four fundamental capabilities: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social skills. The styles used by high impact leaders include: coercive leadership (demands immediate compliance); authoritative leadership (mobilizes others towards a vision); affiliative leadership (creates emotional bonds and harmony); democratic leadership (builds consensus through participation); pacesetter leadership (expects excellence and self-direction); and coaching leadership (develops people for the future). Effective leadership, he claims, requires all of these styles to be used in different situations.

Over and above the need to use each of these styles at different times, Goleman argues that these various styles of leadership can be taught and developed in order to create and enhance effective leadership. Goleman has developed his model based on research with executives already in positions of leadership. However, he claims that a new leader can be trained through the development of these skills. Paul Hersey, founder and CEO of the Centre for Leadership Studies (CLS) and co-founder of Situational Leadership, describes leadership as the capacity to draw on different styles and skills of leadership to suit the situational needs (cited Blackwell 2001).<sup>3</sup> The range of skills he delineates is similar to Goleman's, although he divides them into four groups. Situational leadership further divides leadership skills into two streams, relationship (inclusive and supportive) and task (directive). This movement claims great success in training participants for leadership positions around the world.

<sup>3</sup> The original situational leadership system was co developed in 1969 by Dr Paul Hersey and Dr Ken Blanchard.

Whilst skills can be instilled, the passion that is required to run an organisation cannot. Ricardo Semler (1994), of Maverick fame, threw away his management books and tried to find a natural way to lead. This way, which was 'no way', became an operational success. The skills needed were located in the recognition of who he was and the clear exposition of what the organisation needed.

Cairnes (1998), a leadership strategist in Sydney, suggests in her book, *The Corporate Heart*, that whilst leadership can be learnt, it cannot be taught. The incentive for picking up leadership skills is placed squarely on the shoulders of the individual concerned. No amount of training can enable the will for the position to emerge, or for simply engaging and taking up the leadership. The motivation for leadership has to come from within the individual.

Mintzberg in his book, *Managers Not MBA's*, reveals the results of research investigating the outcomes of leadership positions held by Harvard Business School graduates. He shows that whilst a high percentage of graduates moved into positions of leadership, a very low percentage sustained long-term successes. He concludes that MBA programs fail as appropriate training for leadership in today's business environment. The training is superficial and the demands of business are nuanced. He is very clear that to be a leader, one cannot avoid doing the long and hard work of staying within an organisation and growing one's skills within that environment. Programs that can stimulate people's self-reflective focus on experience are then useful, but not before!

The possibility for leadership to be learnt must allow for the evolution of great leaders including someone like Mandela. My guess is that no one else could have enabled South Africa's transformation to emerge in a peaceful manner. Perhaps his training was the twenty-five years incarceration but his immersion in his vision and cause was total. I am inclined to agree with Mintzberg: there are too many glib courses and shallow promises of success and change.

As a conclusion to this section, I would like to consider leadership learning in relation to my own evolving leadership definition: Leadership is purposeful action that is responsive to the environment and aligned with the individual. This

definition of leadership includes the importance of Hillman's concern for instinct, assumes an in-depth knowledge of the environment and requires the courage to take action. Thus, the emphasis of further learning would be on the reflective skills towards being self-aligned, responsive and intentional. No amount of teaching can offer this, but particular experiences accompanied by reflection on the events may deepen and provide rich learning opportunities to encourage or enhance leadership. My preference is towards a multi-pronged approach to leadership learning.

## **Leadership and vision**

Vision refers to the capacity to see. This is no accident of meaning. The capacity to see, to have insight, to trust intuition (inner vision), to have forward-looking vision, is frequently sought in connection with leadership. Heifetz, director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard University, considers the relationship of leadership to vision:

*The real heroism of leadership involves having the courage to face reality - and helping the people around you to face reality. Of course, in business, vision has come to mean something abstract or even inspirational. But the quality of any vision depends on its accuracy, not just on its appeal or how imaginative it is.*

Heifetz (cited Taylor 1999, p.133)

He claims here that the courage to face reality is the central function of the leader. In the same breath, he discusses having vision. Somehow, the two are aligned. How is it possible to meld both of these functions? Heifetz goes on to explain that whilst the leader may be the one to have the vision, they do not necessarily have all the answers to manifest the vision. The leader will pose well-structured questions and influence the organisation to carefully face its problems and seize its opportunities. The leader should not coerce the organisation to adopt their vision. Facing reality involves meeting conflict and uncertainty, both within the organisation and within oneself. It also means hearing, which is similar to seeing, the opinions of others.

Heifetz (cited Taylor 1999) offers the example of Bill Gates, who in the mid 1990's decided that the Internet was not going to be greatly important in the future and should therefore not be heavily invested in. However, he changed his decision because the people to whom he listened disagreed with him. In the mid 1980's, Ken Olsen of Digital similarly decided that personal computers would not be important. He took a business decision about the direction of the company unilaterally and Digital subsequently suffered huge losses.

Heifetz (1994) suggests that with the world of industry and business changing at such a rapid rate at this time, taking decisions alone can be suicidal. The position of the leader as a stand-alone figure is no longer viable. Facing reality necessarily involves sharing your vision and hearing others' thoughts.

Back in 1941, Robert Greenleaf discussed the relationship between vision and reality succinctly with the following words:

*What does it take to make a rich life out of what one has in hand now? It means an end to daydreaming, speculation on ships coming in, promotions, salary increases, meeting influential people. Focus the mind on what is achievable with the materials and abilities in hand and dream about what is reachable by extending the hand from where one now stands.*

Greenleaf (1998, p.355)

At first glance, these words are simple, easy to understand, almost mundane. However, in reading them carefully, they capture the profundity of processes that may take years or lifetimes to achieve. Greenleaf speaks of developing the capacity for inner or personal leadership. It reaches out 'from where one now stands', emerging from within rather than as a quality that is imposed or a way that can be methodically learnt. Whilst it does not need a new position or qualification, an end to the daydreaming of possibilities and speculations is considered essential. Vision has to be grounded in the reality of how things are, rather than how they ought to be.

The vision that Heifetz referred to is like an accuracy reading for the leadership. It emerges through the leader's immersion in the organisation and carries the importance of a full engagement with the leader's particular qualities, both positive and negative. Without this reading, visions take on an idealism that is not

useful for the organisation or those within. The potential for action and change needs to begin within the organisation rather than to be sought from outside. This is not to say that one should not have vision; the ability to look ahead is essential for leadership. However, an inward reality check is the essential and soft underbelly of vision.

Australian author, Cairnes (1998) expresses a similar idea in saying that before doing any vision building, the reality of oneself has to be faced through inner reflective work. This is because people switch too easily into being an expert with all the answers. Taking responsibility for one's own feelings is a tough learning process and must accompany any vision building.

Vision begins with a down-to-earth reading of oneself. It is not a fantasy or even necessarily an imaginative notion. From this accuracy reading of oneself, one is in a position to consider the needs of the organisation and community. Kouzes and Posner, in *The Leadership Challenge*, offer the definition of vision 'as an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good' (1995, p.119).

Consideration of the common good brings vision into an inclusive and broader framework. Leadership is thereby not motivated by self-gain; it is a responsive action that emerges out of self-knowledge. This rendition of vision and reality is not for the fainthearted!

## **Leadership and followership**

*Am I wrong in concluding that it isn't leadership the country wants in a president but followership... major change in a society's sense of direction - is first shaped in an inchoate consensus reached by the people at large.*

Harlan Cleveland (cited Kouzes 1995, p.132).<sup>4</sup>

The subject of the important relationship between the followers and the leaders has been written about for decades. The model of the old-style leadership had the leader as the major player and the followers as relatively passive and without much importance. Hollander (1995) is an author who writes extensively of the

<sup>4</sup> Harlan Cleveland is a former U.S. Ambassador and was also the Dean of a university. These words were spoken in trying to understand what a country wants from a leader.

importance of followers in the development and understanding of leadership. In order to study their relationships, one of his research processes focussed on critical incidents between the followers and the leaders, supplemented by open-ended questions and rating scales assessing the followers' perceptions of their leaders. Results indicated that the primary quality that followers look for in their leaders is support. This is followed by good communication skills, action orientation, the capacity to be empowering and fairness. The conclusions from this and other studies conducted are that nowadays leadership requires a more active role for followers than in past decades.

Heifetz (cited Taylor 1999), who runs a course at Harvard called 'Exercising Leadership', speaks of the leader's ability to listen to the subtle messages of the followers. This means a team emphasis and the implementation of empowerment systems through delegation and participative decision-making. The departure from traditional power conceptions of the leader as a lone ranger means that leadership can be seen as having interpersonal links with others involved in mutual pursuits. Leadership thus rests in the hands of many and responsibility needs to be shared.

When Nelson Mandela spoke at Sydney University in 2003, he questioned what it means to be a champion. He strongly acknowledged the people of South Africa as providing him a forum for his leadership. Whilst there is no denying that Mandela is a remarkable man whose humility and self-abnegation make him particularly likeable, countless people and groups in South Africa have contributed to the leadership that Mandela represents. Before Mandela was released, the work of change was already in place. The people of the country created the possibility for him to play his role. Mandela, in becoming president of the South African nation, reflected back to the nation what it was already asking for. Leadership emerged out of that context; it was not imposed onto it. Hollander (1995, p.69) says 'there is no leadership without followership; they are a unity.' Whilst this is quite self evident, the implications for leadership and change are interesting and complex because there is far more responsibility placed on the followers to participate in creating what they desire from their leader. This was clearly the case in South Africa.

The followers are the people who experience the actuality of the leader's approach to leadership and are uniquely able to evaluate it and its effects. This was discussed in Chapter 2, as this intrinsic relationship between leader and follower formed one of the methodological bases of the study conducted in the company. The outcome of working intimately with both groups, and enabling each group to hear what the other was thinking and feeling, gave the whole organisation a boost to move forward with a collaborative plan.

### **Leadership development as strategic direction**

Why should an organisation invest in developing the leadership within its ranks? Whilst there is little doubt that good leadership is essential to an organisation's success and progressive development, the question that arises is whether leaders should be brought into an organisation, or developed from within the organisation. In his book *High Flyers*, author Morgan McCall makes the case for the strategic advantage of developing executive talents and leadership. 'Conscious and systematic development of executive leadership talent is, in the long run, the most effective strategy and the one most likely to ensure competitive advantage over time' (McCall 1998, p.192). McCall argues that bringing in leadership from the outside is both expensive and a gamble. Leadership needs to be learnt on the job and the training should be in creating a learning environment to develop the leadership consciously, rather than simply be left to chance.

The other advantages of internal leadership development include the value for investment because investors will always consider the management quality. Furthermore, this policy will draw motivated and already effective people to the organisation, as talented employees prefer to work for companies that will invest in their development. McCall's strategy for developing executive talent involves taking people with talent and the ability to learn from their experience and giving them key experiences as determined by the business strategy. In this way, the needed skills to lead may be developed in situ. He notes that business strategy can be translated into leadership challenges on an ongoing basis. He claims that the business is not separate from the ongoing growth of those who work there and if both can be developed concurrently, so much the better.



There will be times in the life of any organisation when it needs to be open to new ideas and ways of thinking. Some will argue the value of bringing in new leadership. Invariably, as will be discussed in the next chapter on change, the tendencies of new leaders is to make an impression, often in exchange for large pay packages, and try to bring about change rapidly and without a sufficiently in-depth understanding of the nature and culture of the particular organisation. The repercussions of this may be at best short-lived, but many are disastrous. The alternative is to bring in an outside consultant who can act as a feedback facilitator and amplifier.

Similar to what occurred in the study described in Chapters 2, 3 & 4, change consultant Angelika Siegmund (2000 cited Capra 2002, p.108) describes:

*One of my main activities is to act as feedback facilitator and amplifier. I don't design solutions but facilitate feedback; the organisation takes care of the contents. ...[I] amplify the voices of employees who would otherwise not be heard. As a consequence the managers begin to discuss things that would normally not be discussed, and thus the organisation's ability to learn increases.*

'Leaders who facilitate emergence use their own power to empower others' says Capra (2002, p.109). Moreover, Arie de Geus (1997<sup>a</sup> cited Capra 2002, p.109) comments 'Decisions grow in the topsoil of formal and informal conversation'. The strength in these comments lies in the integrity of leadership when it emerges out of the organisation rather than being imposed onto it, either by an external consultant or a new leader. Consistent recognition for the leader to be aligned within themselves comes about through showing commitment to staying within an organisation. It appears to be strategically valuable for an organisation to foster this kind of leadership.

## **Transformational leadership**

Greenleaf, author of the servant leadership concept, argues that followers respond freely to individuals who are trusted in their capacities to serve their followers by enabling the followers to become healthier and more autonomous as individuals. This enabling action can be seen as affecting the followers such that they transform. Writers call this transformational leadership. The notion is that the presence of transformational leadership has a transformative effect on those

around the leader. Another interchangeable word is that of inspirational leadership. Again, the sense is that those in the orbit of such leadership will be similarly inspired to bring their own leadership skills to bear on a situation. The word transformation smacks of something magical. Greenleaf speaks of the transformational person as one who has developed their inner leadership. This coupled with the necessary people skills inspires those around them to find their inner leadership. What does inner leadership mean?

Goffee and Jones (2000) argue that inspirational leaders, as well as having the usual qualities of authority, vision, strategic direction, should display the following four inner leadership qualities:

- selectively reveal a weakness
- pick up and act on soft data
- practice tough empathy
- dare to be different.

These show that a leader has to find their authenticity and the capacity to freely be themselves. After 25 years of coaching and studying leadership, they claim there is no advice that is harder to follow. Transformational leadership is characterised by original and courageous thinking and action, with a significant departure from the past habituated ways of being and doing. It is individualistic and original, creative rather than reactive.

Through individualistic personal development it is evident that transformation for others eventuates. Inspiration or being touched by another comes through an individual simply by them being themselves, natural, with all their human foibles and revealing their weaknesses. When a being is being human or a human is simply being, there is a particular authenticity and individual rigour and its effects on others are telling. There is nothing magical about transformation!

## **Leadership as the quest and the goal**

Leadership is frequently referred to as a goal to be aspired to; something that is now not present but will hopefully one day be realised. Psychoanalyst and author, Carl Jung (cited Bly 1988) says that a goal is not apart from but contained within the quest itself. This is made apparent through the seeking. Hillman (1996) refers to a goal as a feeling already present because in the stretching of each persons imaginations towards that concept and its meaning, the goal is already being realized. I believe this is the case with the topic of leadership. The drive towards understanding leadership has become an important quest in itself. The striving to make sense of leadership is also the striving to find a direction forward and a sense of meaning in a world that has become more confusing than ever.

In amongst and out of the stories, theories and ideas are propounded. The lodestone, like the search for gold that alchemists undertook, is leadership. I believe this is why so much being written about leadership at this time. It reflects the longing for leadership and the need to make sense of our lives in these times of continuous change. As Jung says, it is in the quest itself that the gold is hidden. In writing about leadership, authors discover their own gold. This is perhaps why narrative is used so frequently as a form of writing about leadership. In writing about leadership as a more personal story, the author makes sense of their lives by fitting the pieces together and thereby enabling meaning to emerge. In reading a personal story of leadership, one's own leadership and capacity for taking actions is immediately questioned. The inspiration to enact their own leadership seldom transpires from instructions to do so or from a systematic manual. It will frequently come from being touched or moved into action by the story of action taken by another. The quest is open for each person to reflect on the way they carry their own leadership – whether it be from an official position of leadership or not.

In this humanist phenomenological study into leadership, I have steered away from positional leadership and made the case for leadership that arises from within an individual, any individual. These ideas follow seamlessly from the case study of the earlier chapters where the consideration of the leadership of staff,

irrespective of position held, enabled their leadership to manifest and to be appreciated by management. The possibility of the experience of leadership is the preparedness of individuals to reflect on its potential existence. The drive or the longing for inner leadership, by the individual and those around that individual, is an enabling and creative force towards the experience of leadership. This almost circular reasoning is worth consideration for it points towards the idea that leadership begets leadership, a strange conclusion that will be returned to in Chapter 8.

# Chapter 7

## The Longing for Change

### Background

Whilst leadership inevitably does bring change of one sort or another, various styles of leadership will bring about change in different ways. The manner in which change is brought will inevitably determine how it is received due to the close relationship between leadership and followership. Two main sources have inspired the examination of change and its intrinsic relationship with leadership: In the conversations held with both management and staff within the organisational research of the earlier chapters, each group expressed similar dissatisfactions of the other group; with each requiring the other to make the needed changes. The change desired was the wish for them (the other group) to exercise their leadership. I was left wondering what was sought. What was the quality that each was looking for in the other?

In my reading of the emerging literature on organisational leadership, I find a level of compulsiveness in the need to make internal change in order to cope with the pressures of external change. Leadership or management turn to consultants for help. Solutions brought are often with short term and unsatisfying results. This trend continues in spite of well-documented evidence of its unsatisfactory nature and employees increased dissatisfaction. What are the expectations on the leadership? And again, what kind of change is being sought?

The universal call for change is out of proportion with the stated need to cope with external pressures. It appears that something else of a more immediate nature is being asked for. Senge (1999) shows how the notion of profound change needs to be understood in relation to awareness and a way of being conscious, rather than anything that is externally brought. Such change points to a particular quality of leadership.

## Introduction

The desire for leadership is frequently expressed as a calling for change and the two have become inextricably linked in a world that is rapidly changing. Some changes happen because of external circumstances. This chapter considers change that comes through intentional intervention purposefully created within an organisation.

Organisational life appears to be beset by frequent and unsatisfactory organisational changes. I will argue that many of the discussions espousing the value of change as a relatively easy option are either platitudinous and operate with an idealised view of reality or espouse a type of change that is structural and does not address the underlying issues. I will therefore offer an analysis of the difference between traditional and profound ways of thinking about change and show how the two are often confused and mistaken.<sup>1</sup> The case study of the earlier chapters where I considered the nature of the expressed desire for change will be used to show this difference. This chapter uses the methods of conversation of the case study, the words of that CEO, and the analysis of leadership dreaming to practically incorporate aspects of dream work into understanding change. The intrinsic value of phenomenology as a means of understanding change and leadership is clearly seen.

I will further propose that bringing about significant change requires levels of awareness that transcend the habitual ways of operating and thinking. Examples of working with change will be offered through formal dialogue and dream work, where a theoretical discussion of *epoche* within a modern context will be presented.<sup>2</sup> The implications of profound change on an evolving understanding of leadership as emerging the new, will be considered.

<sup>1</sup> I don't necessarily mean that traditional change cannot be profound, rather that the kind of organisational change that is traditionally conceptualised is of a more structural nature.

<sup>2</sup> *Epoche* literally means suspension. It is a phenomenological concept and can be considered as the returning to the self to discover the nature and meaning of things as they appear and in their essence. This discussion of *epoche* will draw on Husserl, Moustakas and Varela.

## **Internal and external pressures**

The pressures of global competition and rapid technological advancements are amongst the espoused major stimulants for organisations to review and manage their performance vigorously. The ongoing concern is how internal change can keep pace and even manage to pre-empt the external changes that are occurring in the world around them.

Whilst people may continue to be surprised by the changes, they should also remember that historically there have been many waves of major technological development. Since the Industrial Revolution, advancements and comparison in speed, capacity and reliability are part of the stories with which grandparents entertain their offspring. In my lifetime, the same is true but perhaps the graph is exponentially steeper. Whilst there is nothing new about change, in these times change appears to be taking place at an unprecedented rate. One feels quite swept away when a newly purchased computer loses its value within days to the next faster and more efficient model. Manufacturing is at an all time high and the shelf life of products shorter than ever. Soaring stock markets, the creation of enormous wealth, and an explosion in innovation, globalisation, the Internet and an information overload are evident everywhere. As pressure is felt through all organisations from the large technologically driven firms to government departments, schools and hospitals, it seems that no one is immune from facing the pressures of world-wide economic and social forces. These are also frequently associated with growing retrenchments, job insecurity and professional unpredictability.

It is the CEO of the organisation or the top level of leadership that is called upon to effect the internal changes needed to maintain the desired organisational development. New CEO's are often appointed for this very purpose, and they in turn may use external change consultants to bring about the desired changes that the company needs to keep pace with the progress around them.

## **The desire for change**

What underlies the longing for change that is heard so loudly in the literature and reports from people within organisational life? I use the actual words of the CEO of the multinational manufacturing organisation researched in the case study presented in Chapters 2, 3 & 4. His call for change is viewed in the light of the organisational consultancy industry. I also consider the sentiments of the managers and staff from the case study to try and understand what they seem to be asking of one another.

The CEO is an accomplished leader with extensive experience in leadership roles. He has been brought back into the successful multinational company to take it forward in an already competitive global market place. The outcomes of his next years in office are under surveillance with ongoing pressure being applied by the company's international headquarters. Within the company, he is well respected and liked and operates using a power that is fair and effective.

The CEO has employed a leading Australia-based change consultant to train the management team to fully embody their roles. The new positions of leadership have been created to allow for a greater diversity of responsibility. The goal is to develop organisational leaders who are able to meet the challenges of rapidly changing business conditions and take the leadership needed to drive the organisation forward. It is clear that the CEO wants change. He has a vision of a different organisation and the following shows his belief in these objectives.

These words were spoken in an interview given before the leadership-program was due to begin.

*Since the '70s we have been working with various management ideas like 'management by objectives'. This has led to people becoming so good at analysing and articulating and talking - but not so good at doing things. And then more lately we have been working with continuous improvement processes and that has also been interesting and useful. But these are very conventional processes and I realise that we, as an organisation, have gone past this. I now believe we have to manage the inputs and the processes, not the outputs. The outputs will finish up right if you get the input processes right. And by this I mean getting the 'people thing' right. The processes are relatively easy. But there's something limiting about the way industry is*



*approaching tasks because there's a lack of using the breadth of people's abilities.*

*In most cases, the collective output is lower than the sum of the individuals. I believe effective work is where the collective intelligence or output is grossly higher than the sum of the individuals. The way you would see this manifesting in the workplace would be the felt sense of 'hey, we own this issue – where is the solution?' Actually what I am after is probably something more like conscious exploration. This environment has evolved as fast as I have – and it does look for distinctiveness; actually valuing the maverick mindset. Whilst headquarters still have trouble with understanding it historically, they do understand that it is the great source of achievement.*

*In relation to the upcoming leadership program, I do wonder whether we will achieve what we envisage simply because the timing may not be right for a lot of the people. This is a relatively young management team, highly talented intellectually and in the achievement sense, but maybe they aren't ready to think the way I am thinking – in an 'awareness of life' sense. I do believe this is related to age and life experience. I am sure that the older of the team will have the strength and the self confidence to be able to look and stretch and really see themselves...*

A little background on the CEO shows that he is serious about the task ahead. His vision of what he would like to see in the organisation appears to be definite and strong, yet his way of verbalising this is quite vague and he seems to be struggling to find the language to express this directly. He is not seeking a restructure (he had already put that in place before this review) and is clearly interested in the people side of development. For this reason he has decided to bring in an external consultant to be the catalyst for the changes; someone he thinks will deliver his desired outcomes.

This CEO is not unlike the million other worldwide chief executives of companies who, when confronted with the need to make changes within the organisation, calls in an outside consultant to help achieve these changes. Management change consultants profess expertise in the management of change, and the central need, it is felt, is in the development of adequate leaders to direct and sustain the organisation in bringing about the needed changes. I will follow with a brief historical overview of change consultancies.

## **The management consultancy business**

Change itself has become a business. Both the need for and benefits of change are being advocated in an escalating movement of change management. External consultants have an interest in promoting the idea that society, particularly organisational life, is experiencing a rate of change that is disruptive on both the personal and corporate levels. In addition, consultants like to suggest that business is on the cusp of something like a new age in which the management practices of the past are no longer applicable for meeting the business needs of today.

Considered to be the fastest single growing profession of the last two decades, FastCompany Magazine estimates have placed turnover in the change consultancy business at \$25 billion in the USA and \$50 billion worldwide. During its short history, it has been marked by a litany of new techniques with each recent management style innovation purporting to revolutionise the older styles. It appears that, as each of the techniques of meeting change has evolved, managers have felt pressurised to implement the new scheme. Like a new technology, the latest scheme of managing change is applied as a formula. A creative response to one situation easily becomes a destructive movement in its generic application.

The popular change management process, re-engineering, is one occurrence where an attempt to generalise the application of theory has brought a distortion of the original intentions. Arthur Davenport, one of its originators, describes how that movement began with managers experimenting with new uses of information technology to link processes that cut across functional boundaries. Ford, IBM and Mutual Benefit Life were three organisations that benefited from applying this process in its earliest development. The process at the time was not referred to as re-engineering and there were no elaborate change models created. The designers of re-engineering certainly didn't see a movement in the making; all that came later. (Davenport 1995).<sup>3</sup> The subsequent application of re-engineering came to be associated with massive layoffs and restructuring. Neither of these side effects

<sup>3</sup> Re-engineering had its peak of use in 1993 being employed by 78% of the change management market.

was part of its original intentions, but its growing popularity led to a blanket type application without careful consideration given to the nuances of each situation. The consequences thus became destructive. Managers found that a formula that worked well in one place could not be indiscriminately applied elsewhere.

The change management business has remained vulnerable to fads and fashions as shown by Rigby (1998) in Fortune magazine. Whilst re-engineering peaked in the early 1990s, strategic planning was most popular in 1997. The late 1990s were marked by a focus on motivating employees, retaining customers and a movement away from a preoccupation with cost reduction. Ghoshal and Bartlett (1996) note that the average company in the USA committed itself to more than 11 of the 25 popular management tools and techniques between 1990 and 1994.

With the waxing and waning of management practices, the cycle time of acceptance and rejection of a program has been very rapid. Many organisations are now going through their second or third major change program. Kotter (1996) explains that whilst some of these major changes have assisted some organisations to grow and reposition themselves and their capacities for an improved future, other organisations have had appalling results leaving a trail of wasted resources and frustrated, even traumatised employees. Managers have reported feeling stripped of their power and reduced to mere implementers of the consultant's instructions. The role and use of an outside expert to bring about changes continues to be questioned and re-evaluated in many companies and businesses (Kotter 1996).

The case study revealed through the interviews that management as the 'we' referred to 'them' (non-management) with a longing that they would develop increased levels of responsibility for their roles in the organisation (show more leadership). In addition, members of the general staff group as 'we' referred to 'them' (management) with a wish that they would be more definite about communicating their needs (show their leadership).

A member of staff, Charlie, summed up this situation:<sup>4</sup>

*We had a survey done probably about 6 months ago and the major problem across everybody (sic) ... was leadership – lack of. And that also came from the leaders themselves.*

The collated results revealed similar needs that management and staff had for one another. Both management and staff:

- wanted the other to be different
- had similar wishes in relation to the leadership of the other
- wanted to see the others' leadership
- had not been able to communicate their needs to one another so that they felt heard or were satisfied in how they were heard
- commented on the various structures that were in place or planned to remedy the situation.

### **A lack of satisfaction with change programs**

*We don't need new structures to improve communication!*  
Staff interviewee (1998)

*That's the big problem in this place, we keep on instituting these things, but we already have them...*  
Staff interviewee (1998)

Symbolically, each statement stands like a metaphor, poignant and telling, for what is frequently done in the name of change. In the case study, many workers especially the general staff group, were frustrated and disillusioned with the frequent attempts to make changes. In the past, new structures had frequently been put in place, often for no apparent reason. Author Bob Knowling (cited Tichy 1997) says that dissatisfaction with change programs has reached such a level that new change programs should never be introduced as a change program. Disillusionment with them has become so apparent that the very idea of change makes employees sceptical. Knowling suggests they must rather be disguised as something that does not seem threatening.

<sup>4</sup> Charlie's words can be found in Chapter 2 page 64.

If organisations do repeatedly institute them, it surely indicates that they are not targeting the core issues that need to be addressed. Perhaps the underlying issues are too complex or possibly too intimate to handle. It may be easier and more sanitised to put a structural change in place in the hope that the issue will miraculously go away or be sorted out or at least things will appear to address the issue. Senge (1999) regards the frequently expressed desire for change within organisational life more as a reflection of dissatisfactions that are within the organisation than as a proactive desire for change. Further, the longing for change is accompanied by a wave of dissatisfaction and frustration at all the changes that are taking place in a company. Part of the reason for this is associated with the very concept of change, which carries within its meaning a certain optimism or positive expectation.

### **The expectation of change**

Change, especially within organisations, is traditionally equated with progress and improvement. The nature of the many changes that have transpired in the last two decades, especially the more efficient and fast technology, contained the promise of change positively affecting work and life style. There was a belief that working conditions would improve across the board for managers and workers alike. It was imagined that better machinery would shorten working hours; that a flatter organisation would fundamentally affect the power balances and resource allocations; that company value statements would impact on internal relationships; that improved communication strategies would improve communication. Also the greater focus on customer relations would somehow positively affect all relationships. Eckersley (2001) suggests that an increasing emphasis on the more individualistic values like freedom and choice, and the raised expectations for happiness that these are supposed to deliver, can have the reverse effect and lead to greater dysfunctionality as these expectations fail to be realised.

### **Tenacity not to change**

Block (1998) takes this argument further by comparing the continual organisation-imposed changes to a spinning wheel that is simply spinning faster. In an essay focusing on the distance and journey from leadership to citizenship, he notes that

most organisational change has a fiction-like status. This is because, whilst it may appear that changes have transpired, a stability and tenacity to traditional ways of operating are even more remarkable. In his study he found that the core beliefs of 85% of the people at work are untouched by the changes transpiring around them.

Block cautions that any managed effort to change organisational culture is refutable. The required level of organisational penetration takes the argument into a cultural domain for 'culture is the emergence of shared meanings, not a product of top level intentions' (1998, p.88). Culture cannot be created by the will of an individual; it is always an emergent quality created from the sum of all the players.

### **Training for competence**

There is a growing body of literature that provides evidence for the inadequacy of management and leadership training programs to prepare potential leaders for the kinds of challenges in the current world of work. The work of Henry Mintzberg (2004, p.119) in targeting the MBA programs is especially prominent:

*The very characteristics that have gotten the latter [MBA graduates] into senior positions undermine their performance once there: they are too smart, too fast, too confident, too self-serving, and too disconnected. Many of the white knights of heroic management turn out to be the black holes of corporate performance.*

Not only is the training inadequate, it is also considered counterproductive to meeting a world of continuous change. Change agent Godin (2000) claims that what hinders managers' capacity to meet change is their training which has been aimed solely towards developing competence. Godin (2000, p.230) says:

*In the face of change, the 'competent' are helpless for they tend to have a predictable and reliable process for solving particular sorts of problems. Most managers are finding their time honoured business models, predicated on linear thinking, control and predictability, to be inadequate for dealing with the current rate of change they are experiencing. Their solutions maintain a consistency and this in turn breeds a need to guard their competence.*

Philosopher and organisational change agent Koestenbaum (1991) extends this argument with the claim that highly educated business people tend to get stuck, because change is approached as though it were a technical challenge and their approach is therefore too narrow. He says that the issues facing the individual leader in these times are different to past decades and therefore the rules that operated well in the past will not assist in dealing with the future.

In the face of change, which is the business world's biggest challenge, people need to develop authentic answers to basic questions about business life. More than simply skills training or applying an overall change strategy, Koestenbaum claims that real change seems to require an evolutionary transformation of 'who we are'.

### **Hero leader systems**

Block's thesis is that when change is driven from the top of an organisation, it is bound to be short lived and unsustainable. Senge (1999) supports this when he discusses the mythological nature of the hero leader figure that comes into an organisation and creates a 'vicious spiral of dramatic changes' (Senge 1999, p.14). The effect of this imposed change is a generalised diminished leadership capacity within the organisation, which often leads to new crises and then more heroic leaders being appointed. This domino effect is ultimately weakening on the organisation and brings internal resistance to change efforts. Senge speaks of how people themselves don't resist change but they do resist being changed.

### **The complexity of change.**

*We've been through it all before and nothing ever really changes.*

Staff Interviewee (1998)

These words provide a key to looking deeper into the notion of change. Clearly, scepticism and disillusionment have set in because of many disappointments with undelivered expectations of change programs. Underlying this is also a longing or a need emphasised in the word *really*. What is the nature of real change that is desired by this employee? And what is the difference between this real change and the various programs and restructurings that have been implemented previously?

Bolman & Deal (1997) argue that deep down most people want to feel part of their organisation; wanting to know the organisation's purpose; wanting to make a difference. These sentiments are echoed in the words of the CEO above, in describing the many goals he hopes that the managers as new leaders in the organisation will achieve. He expresses:

- the felt sense of 'they own this issue'
- finding the maverick mindset - to be prepared to stand up and take risks
- thinking with an awareness of life
- the strength and self-confidence to see themselves in practice as they really are

He wishes that the managers would develop a level of personal empowerment in their positions that in turn will enable a felt sense of ownership over issues arising in the workplace. The anticipated cultural change or changes to the organisation as a whole would emerge as a result of the personal changes to the individual managers. It is clear that he has a meaning in mind that is different to the expected or the traditional ideas of change. What kind of change is he really highlighting?

### **Traditional and profound change**

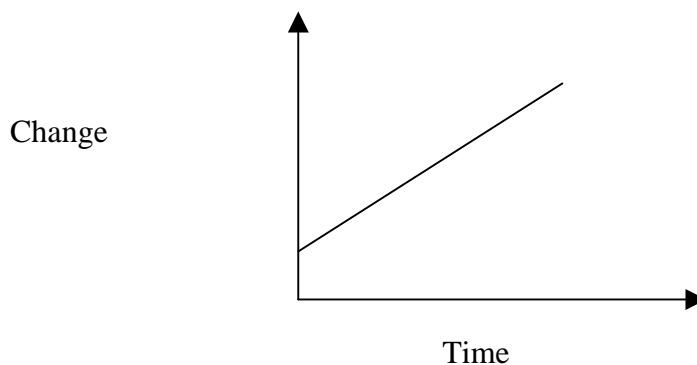
There is confusion in the organisational reporting and literature about the notion of change. Talk tends to be about too much change and yet simultaneously not enough change. This indicates that there are two quite different levels of organisational change present, each with its own particular associated qualities. Senge (1999) differentiates these by referring to the first level of organisational change as traditional change and the second as profound change.

Traditional change is geared towards maintaining an effective and efficient organisation. These are mainly structural changes that may be related to doing more of one thing or less of another and may be geared towards error detection or correction. Examples of this order of change include: developing a more efficient accounting system; streamlining operations towards greater effectiveness; creating strategies for improving communication and improving the flow of information for decision making purposes.



Within the norm of the efficient organisation, these changes maintain the existent quality of the internal relationships by not challenging its fundamental values. The power bases or seats of control are maintained. The results of these changes are measurable and observable and can be seen as transitional changes that may occur frequently in the life of individuals and organisations.

Graphically such change is referred to as first order change and can be represented against time as follows:

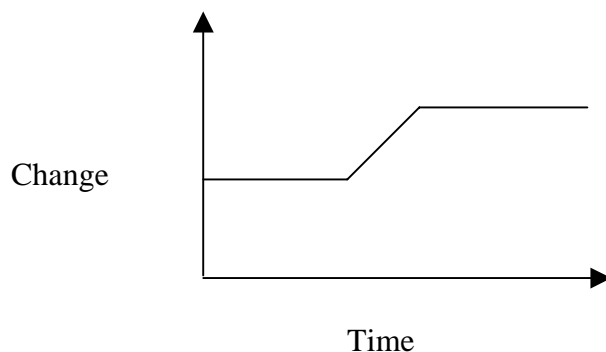


This order of change shows continuity over time with each change visible along the time graph. It corresponds to first order change as described by Argyris (1985). The end point may have a different quality from the beginning. In the terminology used by Kuhn (1996), the change is part of normal science rather than a paradigm shift. The change is likely to be quite easily understood and the stress generated by this change will vary according to the extent of the actions taken. The classical change structures such as reengineering and other restructurings fall into this category. This kind of change is often associated with reducing staff numbers in the name of economic rationalisation. Many so called transformational changes are intended to change the attitudes and beliefs of employees but, as Block (1998, p.88) has found, when the change is driven from the top, attitudes tend to not change. This results in the mistaken identification of first and second order change.

Employees will experience the conditions that second order change brings as quite different from those previously (Argyris 1978). Whilst the name of the organisation or its essential identity may remain the same, the manner in which the individuals both within and external to the organisation relate to it and

experience it, will alter. This type of change may include not only the restructuring of organisational norms, but even the strategies and assumptions associated with those norms. It therefore occurs at a systemic level. The steps towards the change are not transitional but involve qualitative shifts with a transformational quality that may even cause confusion for those involved. More like a revolutionary change than an evolutionary first order one, the effects on employees and interpersonal relationships are significant.

Underlying second order change is the assumption that those involved alter previously held beliefs and cognitions. The values and norms that govern actions are questioned. Disruption can occur, as participants in this level of change are encouraged to provide feedback that may genuinely confront their actions and those of their superiors. Argyris, who characterises first and second order change as single and double loop learning, says that with second order change, learning occurs when the response to an organisational problem takes the form of a joint inquiry into the organisational norms. Inconsistencies are thereby resolved and the norms themselves are made more effectively realisable. Diagrammatically this can be portrayed as follows:



Because this change is abrupt, stress and resistance to this level of change can be severe. An example of this type of change may include a group of corporate managers who realise that in order to meet an external pressure, they will have to undertake a process of inquiry that is significantly different from the current management norms. They may have to recognise that they are faced with a conflict of values, and the results of the inquiry could lead to a restructuring of the organisational norms and even the strategies and assumptions associated with

those norms. Because there is a second loop of feedback, this type of organisational change or the learning that has transpired is referred to as double-loop learning. Second order change amounts to a change in the culture of an organisation. Interpersonal relationships may challenge the usual positions of power as participants extend the parameters of what is acceptable.

Clearly, the quality of change referred to as double loop learning affects the relationship of an individual to the organisation and specifically how the individual consciously relates to the organisation. Stories of employees voluntarily leaving an organisation because of this kind of change are abundant, as they discover their values are not in alignment with newly implemented changes.

Senge (1999, p.14) defines this level of change thus:

*Organisational change that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations and behaviours with 'outer' shifts in processes, strategies practices and systems.*

He refers to such change as profound change. The word profound comes from the Latin word fundus, a base or foundation. The change occurs in a foundational sense. It is invariably accompanied by disruption as learning occurs and capacity is built. This emergent change cannot come about through force or coercion, for it affects one's conscious perceptions or awareness. It is this level of change that the CEO in the case study wanted to affect; the sense of an awareness of life.

Senge (1999) points to this type of change as requiring levels of awareness that step outside habitual thinking patterns. The access to this kind of awareness is not a simple two-step process. Creative awareness, like any profound change, involves moving into an unknown realm. It means putting aside what one intrinsically knows and inviting in aspects that are unknown. These, like the words of the CEO, may be vague and even unclear; new concepts are bound to be uncomfortable. Change can be experienced as risky and even frightening! And yet how else can people find creative responses that step outside of the habitual?

In this next section, I will endeavour to build a picture of this subtle notion of profound change that transpires through awareness. My intention is to use the experience of change to show both its complexity but also its accessibility and possibility.

## **The experience of change**

I will use three situations to describe experiences of profound change. Beginning with the phenomenological methods used to analyse the research in the earlier chapters, I will argue that these methods incorporate levels of awareness that enable change to occur. Drawing on David Bohm's description of dialogue, I will show how dialogue, as a form of inquiry, enables and invites awareness and can be useful in organisational change work. Thirdly, I draw on a method of inquiry that truly promotes change through awareness, dream work. Here, I use a dream and then the work of unfolding the dream to show Varela's description of awareness. This model leads the discussion back to leadership. An understanding of profound change enables leadership that is responsive to emerge and satisfies those longings for change.

## **Phenomenological methods or first person inquiry**

There is a great difference between speaking from habit and speaking from what I term the language of experience.<sup>5</sup> The latter is the conscious awareness of each word as it is spoken. An example of the difference may be the response to an inquiry about work, such as: 'How is work?' In general, a response will be given casually, without a renewed examination of one's experience of work and may be similar in quality to the previous one gave to that particular question. The response becomes familiar, comfortable and acquires a fixed terminology. Particular phrases, even beliefs and thoughts are sustained in their fixed forms as long as they are unchallenged. Like a paradigm, they will shift only when sufficiently challenged. These verbal expressions frequently acquire a tribal form,

<sup>5</sup> This is my own formulation of words that I have not come across elsewhere. The 'experience of language' is a common expression but not the 'language of experience'. The latter is when the moment to moment of ones speaking is consciously experienced, and the words and sentiments being expressed are as new and interesting to the speaker as they are to the listener. The act of speaking or 'linguaging' is being experienced afresh. One becomes a conscious witness of ones own words (or actions). This is an area that I intend to research at a later date.

where the attitudes expressed may give definition to a community and thus become mutually accepted. Similar issues will be complained about and similar issues praised in successive interactions. It is likely that even the words and ideas used by employees may be similar to those of other's in similar work positions. This work narrative may not alter for years, perhaps even decades. There may be additions or alterations and frequently the anecdotes repeat to the extent that the issues experienced in one workplace or relationship, will be carried over to the next work place or relationship.<sup>6</sup> Further interactions serve to stabilise a particular experience firmly.

The above example illustrates the complexity of doing phenomenological research. This type of research attempts to yield responses from interviewees that are original, spoken honestly and freshly from the experience of that individual with sentiments that do not conform to any internal or external expectations. Like a mantra, Husserl (1931) stresses the need to return to the things themselves. What does this imply for the organisational context where human knowledge is bound to language and the things are not actually things at all but the result of a process of classification and naming? Willis (2001) states that the claim of seeking for the things themselves is more of a reference to the stance of the researcher than to what is said. The phenomenological stance attempts to bracket out assumptions and remain attentive to what is present. The mind of the researcher investigating is deliberately open and provides a sustained and disciplined position for the things themselves to manifest. Within the theoretical basis of this type of qualitative research, it is inconceivable that one will find the new if a researcher is not positioned appropriately.

According to Vermeusch (1999, p.35), introspection is an attitude and refers to the accessing of the data of lived experience which otherwise remains pre-reflective. He describes how mediation is the action of assisting in the unfolding of internal experience of the interviewee so that the lived experience is made accessible. This original experience is relived and consequently helps to access original

<sup>6</sup> This is similar within marital relationships where one frequently hears divorcees express surprise when their new partner evokes similar reactions within them as their former partner. Things may appear to change but the underlying structures remain in place.

information. This internal attitude serves as the new point of reference. The usual patterns of describing things are suspended. Verbalisation is the main means, but not the only aspect to access the subject's experience.

Vermersch (1999 p.37) argues that 'The subject communicates more than his project requires him to communicate' and 'the subject verbalises less by himself than he would have done with a mediator'. The body and language signals that are made pre-consciously provide the researcher with prompts that can readily be exploited towards deepened observation or perceptions. Subjects are carried further than they are capable of going without external guidance.

## **Dialogue**

To discuss the process of dialogue, I turn to the first western writer to consider the subject, David Bohm, Nobel Prize winner and theoretical physicist.<sup>7</sup> His development of formal dialogue as a means of effective communicating emerged from his understanding of the centrality of consciousness within quantum physics. I begin by examining some of his reflections and then consider the contribution of dialogue within organisational life.

Bohm was intrigued by the nature of thinking processes. He compared individual thoughts to the spokes of a turning wheel that, because of the wheel's (or the mind's) speed, cannot be noticed individually. Thoughts come and go so swiftly that most of the time one cannot grasp hold of them. He encouraged the idea of slowing down the conversation or learning how to capture the moment, in order to be more aware and thereby suspend judgements or the quick first responses. Through watching his own conversations, he noticed how at special moments in the conversation the words seem to flow off the tongue smoothly and easily, and grammar and vocabulary appear to be linked. He delighted how in spite of himself, or with himself as observer, new ideas emerged. When that happened, the

<sup>7</sup> I refer to western writers in this context because the practice of dialogue has been going on for centuries amongst indigenous groups. Xhosa customs in Southern Africa use dialogue processes for healing. North American Indians have customarily used dialogue to air issues. In many indigenous groups, dialogue is used as a place/time where the community comes together, feelings can be expressed and each person is given the freedom to speak. It is not hierarchically controlled nor is it action or outcome driven.

speaking itself became an experience. These revelations and new insights seemed to occur during conversations with people like Einstein, Krishnamurti or Martin Buber.<sup>8</sup> The fascinating aspect of his revelation was that new ideas and creative moments were embedded in the nature of the interaction and how he felt himself received rather than the brilliance of the content of the communication. This accords with Maturana (1988, p.30) who writes: ‘...it is the criterion of acceptability that the observer applies in his or her listening that determines the reformulations of the praxis of living that constitute explanations in it’.

Language is therefore a variable that depends on the situation at hand. How one speaks and the nature of what is said varies according to the circumstances present; especially the quality of relationships. Human relations are lived and experienced and need acknowledgement. Wittgenstein (in Monk 1990) speaks of language as an alchemical process. He says that since words arise in a situation according to the condition of that situation, the words can both transform experience and bewitch intelligence. Bohm is persuasive in seeking not to persuade but only to speak the truth as it appears at that moment in time.

Since Bohm’s original conceptualisation, over the last two decades dialogue has been developed into a group interactive process. Working without an agenda, a facilitator or leader, it focuses peoples’ attention on collective thought and shared assumptions, and the living social processes that sustain them. Through a group sharing their individual perspectives in an environment that is non-judgemental and mutually accepting, a larger view becomes possible. Dialogue enables the group to both explore and shape its culture leading to action based on the emergent collective thinking processes. It involves the ‘awareness of the living experience of thinking, not reflection after the fact about it’ (Isaacs 1993, p.31). Dialogue is therefore a means to uncover and correct incoherence without imposition. It holds the potentiality for leadership to be expressed at any level within the organisation since each person is equal within the dialogic format. This emerging and powerful mode of inquiry is increasingly being used in

<sup>8</sup> Bohm had many long conversations with each of these and it was through these conversations that many of his ideas were developed. The dialogues with Krishnamurti are published.

organisational change work clearly showing its potential for transformation in ways that are subtle but powerful.

### **Dream work**

Any system of change necessarily begins with a dream, whether at night-time or day time, or simply as a primary conceptualisation towards that change. I have an active interest in the workings of dreams and its impact on experience. During the period through which I was developing an understanding of change in relation to language and conceiving the terminology of language-of-experience, I had a dream that offered significant insight into the workings of change.<sup>9</sup> The theory that follows and explains the process of dream work forms the backbone of a theoretical framework in understanding the change that complements leadership.

I will begin by offering a description of the dream itself:

*I climb out of an elevator (a bit like Alice in Wonderland) on an unexpected floor to find a large field of figures planted in regular spacing on the ground. This ground is a landscape that slopes like the whole earth and stretches out to the horizon. The figures are like busts, lifeless; the remainder of their bodies is buried in the ground or they are cut off at their chests. Most of them are women. They seem to be imprisoned and there is a low rope forming a boundary around the field. A man is standing guard over them. He is an elegant and portly looking character, with a pipe and a beard and has an appearance like Freud. I feel that I ought not be there, but he welcomes me. Then some of these figures call to me and I realise that they have voice and I am surprised by their aliveness. They invite me in and I step over the rope and go up to the one who spoke while a few of them gather around. Their voices are embracing and like a balm to my soul. When they have spoken for a while, our interaction is complete. In the next moment, they are not in the ground any longer but have left that place, and I can see them in the distance boarding a bus, dressed in attractive but quite plain suits. They are going off to attend to their business.*

Dream, by its very nature, lies in the domain of change and vision. It makes a mockery of the habitual by often expressing the most unexpected and out-of-character scenarios. I frequently find my initial interpretation of a dream is limited

<sup>9</sup> Researcher and author of *The Nature of Research*, Angela Brew (2001) discusses how everything takes on a relevance whilst one is doing a thesis. My dreams have played an active part in shaping both my ideas and direction and I have found this to be a useful and relevant source of inspiration.



and even incorrect. To reach a fullness of understanding, a dream requires a deep, concentrated and a strangely renewed awareness of its workings.<sup>10</sup>

I will use the dream in two ways. The first discusses aspects of the content of the dream that are directly relevant to the subject of change. The second discusses the psychological process of working with the dream as an engagement with that imaginal realm from which the new and transformative can arise.

### **The content of the dream**

The following are the central images for me:

*The people in the dream are either lifeless or imprisoned in their bodies until they give expression through voice.*

The expression or language used was an effusive outpouring that arose in the moment, like rain that is created in it's eventuating. It was a reflection of the interaction of that meeting with those particular people in that place. I experienced their voices as deeply penetrative.

*The voices are given intentionally and offer a soothing quality that is unexpected.*

Things are not as they seem. An unexpected event took place in the most unlikely of circumstances. Crossing over the barrier and being receptive enabled the full effect of the words expressed by the figures to be felt.

*After the communication, the people in the dream leave and go to their business.*

When an interaction is complete, the next event can happen easily. This event is strongly reminiscent of the story that Bohm (1990) told about North American Indian groups who would gather for dialogue from time to time. During these gatherings anyone, including elders and children, was allowed to speak. There was no particular order or agenda to the meetings and each speaker was listened to

<sup>10</sup> I have been part of a dream group for about six years. In this practice, dreams are engaged with through the imagination in an embodied dream imagery process.

equally and given the time to complete what was on their minds. When they had all finished speaking, the gathering ended, their meeting was complete, and the people would wander off to their respective jobs. They seemed to know what they had to do in their work as a result of their interaction. It was as though a mutual understanding or agreement had been reached through their meeting and hearing of one another. The dialogue or conversation enables the smooth shift from one state to the next. These dream images appear to demonstrate the value of conversational processes as both nurturing and enabling.

### **Working with the dream**

The experience of working with the dream was a personally confusing and confronting process. It was in retrospect that the experience provided insight and a newfound clarity into the nature of change. The dream's unfolding was a slow-motion process of moving through the mind's dark and unknown regions and eventually opening into light. The process clearly shows the very steps of change that Varela (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2000) describes as 'the gesture of awareness', and these are the steps that anyone who is responsible for a change process, has to confront.

### **The dream workshop**

The dream workshop operates on the assumption that dreams carry an innate wisdom and through working with the dream images in particular ways, the dreamer can gain an in-depth appreciation of its meaning.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of the workshop is to teach by showing students how to facilitate a dreamer in working through their dream.<sup>12</sup> The facilitator is Robert Bosnak, Jungian Analyst and

<sup>11</sup> This particular dream workshop was held in Sydney with Robert Bosnak in 2002. Bosnak is a Dutch Jungian analyst who lived and studied in the United States and moved to Sydney in 2004. He is the author of *A Little Course in Dreams*, *Christopher's Dreams: Dreaming and Living with AIDS* and *Tracks in the Wilderness of Dreaming*. In the late 1970's he pioneered a radically new method of dreamwork based loosely on the work of C.G.Jung, especially Jung's technique of active imagination and studies of alchemy. Based on the notion that from the point of view of the dreaming state of mind, dreams are real events in real environments, Bosnak's methods to re-enter dreams are by inducing a hypnagogic state, a state of consciousness between waking and sleeping, through a process of careful questioning. More about Bosnak can be found on [www.cyberdreamwork.com](http://www.cyberdreamwork.com).

<sup>12</sup> The particular images that arise in the dream have a variety of possible origins. Through discovering the relationship that the dreamer has with the images, the learning occurs.

author of many books on dream work. I volunteered to share my dream as a case study.

I began by retelling the whole dream as though I was reliving it. Bosnak then led me through recreating the feeling states and images of the dream by describing and amplifying various moments that seemed to carry significance. I will graphically describe my experience of working with the section in the dream when the women speak to me:

*I am recalling the moment where the women speak to me. I find I have an urge that persists to complete working with that part of the dream. I find myself interpreting the meaning of the women and their voices and cannot hold and simply experience the moment. The more I try, the more confused I become. I then experience myself as failing to perform the required task. Confusion sets in and I find myself lost in a spiral of colours and patterns. I speak aloud of the experience of self-judgement and how I feel caught by it. The skilful facilitator carefully acknowledges this internalised critic who is the judge. When acknowledged, I am able to let go of the intellectual and thinking processes. I find myself going through a tunnel or a whirlwind. There is little choice but to give myself to the experience. It is as though I am going into an unconscious place. I emerge out of the journey and become a mountain covered with snow, in the bright sunlight. There is nothing of me, only the image starkly present. Like a place of arrival, this offers a point of completion and resolution with the dream. The engagement with the complexity had evolved into a new image and I find myself in a kind of breakthrough place. I feel relieved and renewed.*

I understand the above occurrence as follows: the process of engaging deeply with the images and leaving aside the habitual responses of intellectual interpretation, is necessarily challenging. At the moment that was particularly sensitive (speaking with the women), a strong inclination arose in me to distance myself from the image. At that point, I was not able to stay engaged with the phenomenon. I tried to interpret and intellectualise the phenomenon. I recognise that I was trying to avoid the engagement. I concurrently felt critical of myself for not being able to engage and then found I was caught in a confusing spiral of the image, the interpretation and my self-criticism. In letting go of the self-criticism, I also let go of the preconceived interpretation and thus the needed shift was enabled. Like a vortex of experience, a transformative moment into a new state occurred.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This sounds like a case of drug-induced altered states, but it was not. It also reminds me of the period of transition during labour in giving birth to a baby. In this state, one is fully dilated but the

This experience provides a graphic description of what transpires when one stays in the moment of discomfort and allows the felt sense of the experience to have its impact. This slow process of moment-to-moment awareness shows how awareness emerges as an interaction of consciousness and the impact of senses. It is instructive in relation to the learning that is sometimes required to break out of habitual patterns of operating. Each time the decision is taken to step out of a habitual response, one opens to an unknown moment. Sustaining the engagement in this moment is necessarily risky and uncertain. I believe this is the source of the creative response, which is described in the next paragraph.

### **The gesture of awareness**

Neurophysicist Francesco Varela documents this process in an article entitled *The Gesture of Awareness* (in Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2000).<sup>14</sup> The discussion of awareness and the process of becoming aware shows the complexity involved in breaking out of fixed ways of seeing the world. He discusses how judgement or interpretation maintains experience in the known. He calls this the looking-for. This state enables a level of control and thereby a separateness from experiencing the yet to be revealed or the unknown. In order, however, to become aware, one has to shift from the looking-for to the letting-come (1999, p.6). This involves a state of receptiveness to the not yet known.

Varela, drawing on a Buddhist understanding of consciousness, has developed this transformational concept, the epoche, incorporating Husserl's concepts of reduction and epoche.<sup>15</sup> The phenomenological notion, epoche, was originally described by Husserl (1931), and is central to an understanding of phenomenology. Husserl translated epoche as abstention, because the habitually

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bearing down time has not yet begun. One goes through peculiar emotions that are confusing and disorientating. This period is much described but little understood. I believe states of momentary confusion occur in consciousness quite frequently but through distractions and other well-practiced avoidance techniques, they are disavowed and quickly glossed over.

<sup>14</sup> Whilst this article by Depraz, Varela and Vermersch (2000) shows three authors with Varela's name in the middle; based on Varela's other extensive writings I tend to attribute the major ideas to him.

<sup>15</sup> Varela, a neurophysicist and phenomenologist, was a practising Buddhist (he died in 2003). He compares Husserl's version of epoche with the Buddhist practice of mindfulness.

responding self is in a state of abstention. It is also the moment by moment of experience or the sense of something coming into being,  
'The whole world as placed within the nature-setting and presented in experience as real, taken completely "free from all theory" just as it is in reality experienced' (Husserl 1931, p.78).

Husserl uses words such as presuppositionlessness and no prejudgements to describe the state with which to approach and have access to the world where one is abstaining from imposing any judgement. Awareness is simply about presence of the world and what it offers. Varela incorporates Husserl's epoche and extends the idea of awareness to include the moment of awakening or of becoming aware of something. It is consciousness in action operating consciously, a powerful description of a cycle of creativity as it occurs within the individual. This process is essentially in action within a creative impulse. By describing each stage and learning to be conscious of their unfolding, it is possible to position oneself in order to stimulate its occurrence. Varela describes the three aspects that constitute the cycle of epoche: suspension, redirection and letting go. Whilst suspension is not necessarily first in order, each of these processes is employed in order to meet a situation with a fresh intelligence.

#### a. Suspension

This means the breaking of habitual ways of responding. Suspending involves becoming aware of the habitual response, which can be an immediate or knee-jerk reaction, and then being prepared to shelve it. It does not mean removing or rejecting those ways of responding or emotionally reacting, simply stopping in ones footsteps and noticing what one is naturally inclined to say or feel. This holds the moment in suspension and represents a break from non-examined attitudes. Metaphorically, I think of suspension as allowing one's thoughts or usual habitual responses to be hung like a jewel suspended. They are noted and put aside, available for examination or use should one need them. One is now open to something else, the other possibilities.

b. Redirection

This is a gesture to redirect one's energy or attention from the outer world to the inner world or from the external to the internal self. This redirection of attention has to be made consciously and is referred to by Husserl as equivalent to a conversion experience. The habitual is always oriented to the external world. This phase requires the conscious commitment after holding back the usual reaction, which is suspended in order to turn towards, and in those moments to seek for one's inner or felt experience.

c. Letting go

This is the receptivity to what is invoked or brought forth out of the silence from within oneself. It is allowing what is within to be expressed, even though it may be unfamiliar or unusual, trusting that it has emerged from one's own experience.

These three stages are complex to capture and describe yet terribly important, for this theoretical exposition lies at the heart of any creative process and therefore represents the attempt at becoming more aware or conscious. Varela points to two main difficulties in putting the epoche into practice. These difficulties are relevant for understanding why bringing about profound change is so difficult. They include: (1) abandoning the habitual or natural attitudes and (2) being able to become receptive.

**The *habitual* habitual**

Maintaining well-practised routines in one's story-telling results in little variety in ways of relating and therefore, actual experiencing. Ideas may get a different coating of colour, but fundamentally little changes in the way one's world appears. This is reflected in the ongoing similarity of issues, fears and longings that continue throughout one's life. In spite of having many experiences in life, perpetuating the same ways of thinking or reflecting about them results in the same fears and concerns that possessed one in childhood being carried through into adulthood. In general, the new tends to be slotted into the older set ways of seeing and appreciating experiences. The result of this is a process of not learning from experience.

In applying the same ways of thinking, learning is not enabled to transpire. Maturana (1988, p.27) expresses the continuous conflating of experience with these words: 'we collapse the experience upon the explanation of the experience in the explanation of the experience'. Experience tends to become the experience that remains in the reflection or telling of it. The explaining of the experience through verbalisation therefore cements it. In addition, the initial or pre-reflective reaction to an experience may fix the experience in time and state. The habitual is habitual indeed. To break from it requires a supreme act of will.

### **Receptivity**

Moustakas (1994) compares letting go of the known with swimming in an unknown current. This is a useful metaphor for the process of opening oneself anew to whatever is unfolding. It is quite the opposite of relying on the habitual for it involves the journey of discovering the nature and the meaning of things as they appear and in their essence. This process does not seem to come naturally to an adult, although children are naturally receptive. It is a challenging activity that requires willpower. When Spiegelberg (1994) said that phenomenology begins in silence, this refers to the stance of receptivity. It involves opening oneself to the phenomenon as that which appears to the consciousness; this represents the starting point of an investigation. A point of beginning is without prejudgements or expectations.

### **The meaning for leadership**

*Like it or not, change cannot be turned on and off. At the moment it is flowing uncontrollably. Put your hand over it and the water will spread in all directions. Sit back and you will drown.*

Nordstrøm and Ridderstråle (2000)

We have seen how organisational change consultants have tended to bring about changes that are either not fitting to the organisational needs or are imposed in ways that disempower employees. Confusion arises when traditional change is expected to be profound. The wholesale application of new systems, largely structural or traditional, being called profound change is at best an illusion, and at worst a deceit and betrayal of the employees. One can see how the very quality of management training and competency resists the nature of change. The nature of

change is a complex and tricky business at the best of times. Yet people are aware generally of the far-reaching and dramatic changes that are concentrated upon business, the individual and society. How indeed is a leader to meet the tidal wave of changes? Morgan McCall (1998, p.192) states that: 'the more change that lies ahead, the more important effective leadership will be'. He cites a study concluding that competent leadership at the top of an organisation is the single most important factor that distinguishes successful major changes from those that fail. He notes that it is essential to have a greater quantity of effective leadership in flatter and more responsive organisations. At the same time, Senge (1999) shows there is little evidence of success when top management drives the change.

What then is the role of leadership in enabling profound change to transpire? The wish to change is a romantic notion. Anyone who has honestly tried to change a way of behaving or communicating knows that making changes is never an easy matter. It is easily spoken of, frequently hoped for, dreamed about and even planned. The possibility may seem tangible and within ones grasp, and then change shows its mercurial and trickster character when changes are attempted. That 'old habits die hard' is a truism for most, even though the old habits may make one unhappy. The familiar is comfortable and known; the change towards the profoundly new is always unknown and risky.

I wish to return to the quality of change requested by the CEO mentioned at the start of this chapter. I notice that the change he desires focuses on the way the individual operates within the organisation and requires the full engagement of their will. However, personal development processes that involve transformation will inevitably move people through complex emotional states including challenge, resistance and avoidance. What role does the CEO have in such a process of profound change?

Nobel Prize winning scientist Ilya Prigogine, shows that a level of chaos necessarily marks transformational processes (cited Kaplan 2002). In order to raise the system to the next level of order, profound change will be accompanied by confusion. When an intervention is orientated towards people and their



development, risk-taking and the fear of the unexpected will inevitably be present. Natural resistance, emotions and fears will arise and these must all be allowed place to surface and be sensitively and consciously met. This requires appropriate psychological training on the part of the facilitator of such a process (Kaplan 2002). Rather than making the decisions or restructuring the organisation from the outside, the facilitator could now take the role of real consulting to the employees or managers. The CEO will not be a hero leader directing operations with the answers. Instead employees will be encouraged as the experts in the workplace and the attempt made to enhance their own capacities in their particular roles, whether as managers, leaders or neither. The implication is that, rather than compromising one's leadership or role, the process would encourage and stimulate each person's capacity to put their own expertise into practice. The role of the CEO thereby becomes more of a coach or facilitator than one of expert. The community of employees carve their future collaboratively and individually. The community of practitioners shape their future finding processes to sustain these changes.

This kind of change therefore results in a far subtler role for CEO's or managers than people are used to. The skills of control and power are minimised. The new skills include abandoning the habitual and opening up to the new. This requires receptivity to the various needs that inevitably arise in such a changing workplace. Whilst these are skills important for the CEO, they are needed in some measure by all people in the workplace, for profound change results in leadership being vested in the hands of most of the workers. This is really what is longed for when employees say that 'nothing ever really changes'. It is not every CEO who is ready to carry the style of leadership conducive to profound change.

# Chapter 8

## Leadership Crystallised

### Background

My first introduction to the value of considering leadership as a personal capacity and inner experience was in the 1980's in South Africa with multicultural youth groups. This is briefly described in the introduction to my thesis, Chapter 1. A recent personal experience synchronistically and ironically directly connected with that distant period of my life. This experience, which will be fully described in the content of the chapter, provides the inspiration and background for this chapter. The theory developed through Chapters 1-7 provides the basis for the crystallisation of a theoretical framework for understanding leadership.

### Introduction

This chapter will apply a phenomenological philosophical approach to the author's experience of leadership with the intention of describing its structure or underlying form. The description of my experience, generated by a self-reflective process, provides the raw data for the analysis. Through extracting the essential qualities of my experience, three categories that contain and extend these qualities are developed and form the framework comprising the three categories as constellations: synchronicity, clarity of intention and co-creativity.

I suggest that the application of the constellations results in a potential adult learning experience that adds leadership value to one's experience. The consideration of the influence of the constellations as a new theoretical framework is called Confluent Leadership. The general possibilities for application of the results are alluded to. The theoretical basis for this work is a classical philosophical phenomenological analysis. I have drawn on phenomenologist authors Giorgi (2003) and Crotty (1996) for the step-by-step analysis of the experience. The interpretations of Polkinghorne (1989) and Willis (2001) have provided practical details in the analysis. Husserl (1969) has continued to inform the overall methodology with regard to allowing only the experience or 'back to the things themselves' to inform the analysis.

Contemporary organisational authors Senge (1999), Scharmer (2001), and Jaworski (1996) inform and position a developing framework of leadership. Varela (1999), whose work on awareness so vitally informed the understanding of change described in Chapter 7, provides the basis for the impact of consciousness on leadership development. These form the foundations for a new theoretical framework.

For the purposes of evolving a renewed understanding of leadership, I have suspended my prior knowledge of leadership and allowed the lived experience of the description, through the narrative, to inform the analysis. This is within the spirit of my thesis where knowledge formation is continuously based on the experience itself.

### **Description of the experience**

The hero's journey is a useful form through which to describe an experience.<sup>1</sup> The following story is used loosely to describe those aspects of the experience that appear to express the phenomenon of leadership. The categories that make up the hero's journey' include: the call (to adventure); refusal of the call (the doubts); crossing the threshold; the trial (test along the way); helpers; return; the gift. These descriptors of milestones have the generality and universality to provide a broad but hopefully not indulgent telling of the journey. Through this form, the story is spontaneously told and remains grammatically unedited.

<sup>1</sup> First described and popularised by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. The phases of the hero's journey were also adapted as chapter headings by Joseph Jaworski (1996)

**The call:** *A natural introvert by nature, I have avoided any role involving the public eye or holding a leadership role for organizing events or new projects. I have seldom voluntarily taken on those roles where I would need to involve others in supporting or assisting in the task at hand. I have frequently been a network and support person, taking the responsibility to deliver particular functions for start-up projects or events. It is the taking of the overall responsibility, the holder of the whole picture that I have shied away from. But when the suggestion came from the executive director of a particular South African organisation to consider supporting a fundraising trip that she would make to Australia for this organisation, I found an immediate resonance with it and agreed wholeheartedly to an involvement.*

**Background to Educo:** *The roots of Educo were laid in the late 1980's in South Africa with year-long leadership courses for multicultural youth groups.<sup>2</sup> A group of us facilitated what we called leadership training for these groups of young people who, in the process of finding who they were in a deeply divided society, had to cross that entrenched racial divide for the first time and face the concomitant emotional upheavals that this brought. It was my first introduction to the notion of leadership as a potential capacity that is inherent in each person as they find the courage to meet their own shadows and internal barriers to expressing their potential. I learnt then that leadership is not about having a position to take charge but about taking charge of one's position. Educo was established the year I immigrated to Australia in 1994. (This was also the year that Mandela was inaugurated as President of South Africa).*

**Refusal:** *The initial agreement was situated in a New York-style deli over pastries and good coffee. The Christmas holiday spirit was in the air, as was the convivial meeting of old friends within a vibrant and affirmative conversation. It was a far cry from the reality of what would actually be entailed in taking action. At that time, I had little idea what I was agreeing to and neither did the director, Marian. Further email contact months later led to an agreement about August, a rather vague date existing on the calendar, as the month for Marian's visit. Its creeping proximity was accompanied by a frequently felt "who me?" shudder but also a deeply felt acceptance of the task and an accompanying frisson as the parallel process of dreaming into what a fundraising event could look like, filled my consciousness.*

*What did heeding this call mean to me and what would I have to do or give up in order to take it on?*

- *Another broken resolve as I had decided that I wouldn't take on anything new. I had my thesis to do. I was not doing workshops, any educational events or beginning, new jobs. I was trying to stay focused on my primary task.*

<sup>2</sup> Educo is the South African youth wilderness organisation of which Marian Goodman is the Executive Director. More information about the organisation can be found on <http://www.educo.org.za> Further information about the Australian visit can also be seen on the website.

- *A clear self definition in relation to what I do. There are many things in my life that I don't do and one of them is organising fundraisers. I am always happy to support other people but I exclude myself from overseeing that task. I also tend to not take the lead for star- up events or organisations.*
- *The security of a pattern and way of operating within which I was secure. The introvert within was very satisfied spending many hours in a study writing about leadership rather than actually doing anything in the real world.*

**Support:** *More than having to give up, I was deeply afraid of what I might have committed myself to. I didn't yet know what it would look like. I realised I needed to find some support. I needed help to define and design the task more specifically. I had never done anything like this before. I had to find people who had experience. I also wanted to find a friend to walk the distance with me and share in the more psychological and personal concerns. I soon found a number of colleagues involved in youth organisations in Sydney who potentially had an interest in the youth work of Educo. I found others who had an interest in the idea of supporting a worthwhile South African organisation. I was both surprised and heartened by the immediacy and willingness to participate of a good number of people. An interested and vibrant committee quickly formed around a warm hearth and a bottle of red. In our first meeting, it became apparent that this visit by the director would be two streamed with fundraising for a South African organisation engaged in healing youth work in the post-apartheid environment would be only one aspect. It also emerged interestingly that Educo was a highly professional organisation operating optimally with regard to youth leadership and this visit could provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas with both indigenous and non-indigenous youth organisations in Australia.*

**Threshold:** *This meeting was my first experience since the conception of the visit that ideas were opened to a group of others. I felt enthusiasm about the sense of others embracing the project and this made me feel less alone as the driver; at the same time, I realised that I would be treading that fine line of controlling and abdicating power over how this project would eventuate.*

**Crossing a threshold:** *I was touching into my cultural roots and remembering the country of my birth and how painful and precious its unfolding history has been. Also, the delicacy and the tenderness of the healing that the post-apartheid years require and how Educo is deeply contributing to what is so needed. In my remembering, I realized how easily we forget through emigrating; having these memories and feelings kindled, I saw how this event could offer that rekindling for other South Africans who have emigrated. I decided to call the fund raising evening "Remembering Your Roots". I was now ready to take on the role in which I already found myself.*

*As August approached, the details and the small and large tasks involved most of my time and energy. The universe appeared to be supporting each step of the way in extraordinary ways:*

- *the exact people needed for specific jobs just seemed to appear*
- *the bank waived fees and the emigration department supplied unusually extended visas which were not even requested*
- *parking places outside city locations were simply available*
- *the enthusiasm and willingness for particular tasks displayed by many individuals extended far beyond the call of duty*
- *an abundance of ideas and possibilities was generated*
- *unexpected generosity of organisations to donate finances and time*

*It seemed to me that I was journeying on a wave that emanated from beyond my orbit. I was simply trying to keep my eyes wide open and my heart continuously receptive as the approaching 10-day visit filled with engagements and orchestrated events. The director would hardly have time for sightseeing in Sydney. The energy was electric; hurdles were overcome; bookings came propitiously.*

***A trial:** At the end of one particularly stressful afternoon which involved moving from one event to the next and our impending cabaret night planning was in the process of going horribly wrong, I was abruptly stopped in my footsteps as my style of operating was challenged and criticized. It came from the person who had provided the closest support and friendship to me through all the planning and creating of the entire Educo visit. He told me how he felt both offended and excluded by how I sometimes did things. He spoke in generalisations and I could not, at the time, understand what I had done to offend him. I immediately took the criticism onto myself and felt bad and then apologetic and guilty in a very general way. The criticism took place in front of the Educo director and her colleague. This added insult to injury, as embarrassment and shame were also felt emotions.*

***Helpers:** In considering this event later, I realised that leadership cannot always satisfy and accommodate each personality. In that instance, the task at hand was pressurising me and required all of my presence. I realised there were gender and personality issues involved in the criticism. I also know that my style is sometimes abrupt.*

*It made me reflect and take stock of the situation. It was an internal battle and emotionally exacting. Retrospectively, the difficulty became helpful as I made sense of the experience and sharpened my commitment to the task.*

***The return:** I returned and reconnected with the task with renewed resolve. **The gift:** At a final gathering of all those who helped to create and support the events, several people expressed their enjoyment and engagement at being involved and one person commented on the inspirational nature of my leadership. We discussed further what she meant and she spoke slowly and thoughtfully about a deep sense of freedom to really run with and be creative with her tasks. More than that, she felt trusted and also trusted herself to do*

*things that she had not done before. She expressed a sense of purpose that was generated through being involved. Others echoed their agreement.*

*The fundraising itself had been successful. The many organisations that heard the director's presentation were moved to try and find ways of partnering or exchanging ideas in the future. The main event was well received and the feedback continues to ripple through the community. Media coverage has led to ongoing donations.*

## **Reflection on the experience**

In considering the above experience, I was interested to find out what made this experience one of leadership. I reflected at length on the experience and began drawing out the main ingredients. I found there were interpretations, explanations and generalisations that covered both the experience and the principles of the experience. This reflection became a sense-making process in consideration of the relationship between these three factors. As they grew into concepts and matured upon further reflection, I found that a phenomenological interpretation was helpful and this led to the application of a phenomenological analysis. I will introduce the methodology of the phenomenological analysis and then demonstrate the actual steps in practice with regard to the above description. I will conclude this section by drawing together some generalisations regarding leadership and methodology, as these are relevant to leadership development.

## **Phenomenological analysis**

A phenomenological analysis always proceeds with an intention. In this case, leadership is the object of the analysis or the phenomenon, and the intentionality like an orientation of the analysis is towards the phenomenon of leadership.<sup>3</sup> The following steps for analysis have been distilled from Polkinghorne (1989), Giorgi (2003) and Willis (2001), and adapted to suit the subject matter and purposes of this analysis. Each step proceeds with reference back to the lived experience of the description above. The analysis proceeds with the following steps:

<sup>3</sup> Husserl discusses that the world can never be known directly; it is known through language. Thinking is therefore always directed as thinking towards an object. Similarly, all objects/stories are approached with an orientation, either conscious or not.

- a. Read through the description. This is done in a receptive state in order to gain a sense of the whole description without initially any concern for the possible uses or repercussions of the analysis process.
- b. Review the description and isolate essential ingredients or outstanding features. These are naïve descriptions, almost intuitively generated: ‘...the aim here is to try to disclose the most naïve and basic interpretation that is already there but as yet is unelaborated in the life world experience’ (Willis 2001, p.9).<sup>4</sup> These may be concrete, vague or overlapping and are implied in the language usage of the description. Giorgi (2003) refers to these features as meaning units.
- c. These features are placed in broad categories and the categories are honed towards including more features of the description. The reflection process may give rise to further categories or features and these are added. Those features that are limited only to a specific situation are removed.
- d. Imaginative Variation is a redescription and transformation of the categories and meaning units from the original language towards capturing the underlying broad psychological dimensions of the description.<sup>5</sup> The categories are interrogated until the essential nature of the phenomenon is achieved.<sup>6</sup> This is like a process of knowledge development moving from the whole to the parts and back again. This results in three new elements of understanding the experience.<sup>7</sup> These can be seen to stand for the actual experience and thereby provide insight into the experience. Spiegelberg (1994, p.698) says this process provides a stepping-stone for the apprehension of the general essence of leadership.

<sup>4</sup> I use the word intuitive here to imply that the list is assembled without lengthy consideration.

<sup>5</sup> Spiegelberg (1994, p.700) says that Husserl called this phenomenological process *eidetic intuiting* and others prefer to call it the *experience of essences* or *insight into essences*. ‘Such particulars may be given either in perception or in imagination or in a combination of both’ (Spiegelberg 1994, p.697). If it is assumed that the phenomenon (of leadership) is like a hologram, then the example that comes through imaginative variation is an expression of the whole.

<sup>6</sup> I am aware that using the word ‘essence’ evokes Platonic overtones. But considering that all knowledge is historically constructed, essence means simply that which is essential to their construction (Crotty 1998).

<sup>7</sup> An element stands apart from the original description whereas the meaning unit is drawn directly out of the description.



- e. The three elements are again related back to the experience of leadership, questioning their capacity to capture an essential structure of leadership.<sup>8</sup> They are adapted and changed until they become like landmarks that evolve out of the landscape of the narrative. For the purposes of this analysis, these three elements are renamed and will come to be described as constellations of leadership.<sup>9</sup> Each has a variety of characteristics like a constellation: some seen, some unseen; some brighter, some more vague, some yet to be revealed. These constellations are described comprehensively allowing imagination and reflection to mix with the bodily memory of the experience. The psychological dynamic of the constellation is expanded towards appreciating the boundaries of each term's operation and its influence.
- f. Consideration is given to the contribution that each of these constellations make to the structure of the whole phenomenon and then how each is part of and essential to an emergent framework of leadership.
- g. The possible application of the new structure towards other situations is considered.

Giorgi (2003) claims that a method must be all of methodical, critical, systematic and also general in order to give the resulting knowledge formation, validity and credibility. Briefly, it is methodical because another researcher can follow the steps outlined; critical in that this knowledge is being developed with the intention of continuous adaptation as experience and application evince; systematic because connections between disciplines are stated and recognised; and general because the knowledge gained can be applied to situations other than the one described.

<sup>8</sup> In phenomenology, structure is used to describe the underlying meaning, essence or form, which results from a phenomenological analysis.

<sup>9</sup> The use of the word, constellation, is from Crotty (1998). He in turn borrowed it from the philosopher Theodor Adorno. Its intention is to provide a perspective with breadth and depth. Its use avoids exactness and invites a slightly vague, open and evolving understanding. Constellation also implies a useful and viable arrangement that is inconclusive and will quite likely change in time. The clarity of understanding and the lack of definiteness is a characteristic of phenomenology.

The following is the application of steps a-g:

- a. The description is read receptively and slowly.
  
- b. Naïve features selected:
  - stepping into an unknown place ... taking a personal risk
  - friendships can be threatened in the process
  - staying open to shifting ideas, flexibility, continuous creativity
  - synchronicities with thesis, country
  - interweaving of self with community ... enabling an enlarged creative will that melded my will with that of others
  - managing the difficulties, feeling the insecurities
  - enabling others to fully step into their roles
  
- c. Categories and further features

#### Intentionality

- sense of inner commitment to the task – experienced in a strong and gentle way – willingness rather than force of will
- sense of unwavering belief in what I was doing
- sense of (universal) support through synchronicities

#### Timing

- fitting in with thesis
- parking meters, visas – events colluded
- each aspect suited – a sense of perfect timing, like a piece of music

#### Relationships

- sense of others as sharing the vision ... often surrendering to others
- enabling the participation of each according to their will (-ingness)
- incorporating others in partnering
- uncertainty about some outcomes
- emotional aloneness

Engagement in the task

- ongoing inner certainty for the task
- continuous doubts about the action needed for the next step
- stepping into an unknown place accompanied by self-doubt about my capacity to tackle certain tasks

d. Imaginative variation of the categories above result in the following three psychological dimensions (elements) of the experience:

- a sense of timing
- unwavering willingness
- creativity as a group

e. From elements to constellations: the psychological expansion of the elements is described more fluidly leading to further refinement of the terminology. The resulting constellations become:

- Synchronicity
- Clarity of Intention
- Co-creativity

### **The sense of timing...Synchronicity**

Jaworski (1996) speaks of his path of life and leadership and how, at times, outer events unfold and appear to meet an inner readiness from the individual for just those events. It is as though the timing were somehow designed to fit the needs of the individual, the community and the task concerned. How events will unfold is unpredictable. There is no guarantee of success for actions embarked upon but it is as though, on reflection, the order and meaning for what has arisen, is clear. As I was about to begin writing this chapter, it appeared to me that the universe directly conspired to provide an experience that was serendipitous and synchronous in a way that I could never have consciously created. The described story is exemplary in its timing.

This was not the first time I had attempted to do fundraising for Educo. In 1994, soon after immigrating to Australia, I tried. I gave up after hitting many blank walls. I realised this was not a good way to immigrate to a new country. South Africa had to be set aside in order to engage fully with the new country. In retrospect, it is clear that the timing was definitely not right. This simple idiom is poignant in approaching the concept of synchronicity. Arthur Koestler (cited Jaworski 1996, p.185), paraphrasing Jung, defines synchronicity as ‘the seemingly accidental meeting of two unrelated causal chains in a coincidental event which appears highly improbable and highly significant’.<sup>10</sup> The kinds of phrases that accompany this type of phenomenon include: *doors seem to open*; a kind of *magical flow happens*; *like a coherence in the field*; *the right people appear*; jobs are *inexplicably easily completed*.

The request for me to take on fundraising and coordinating the Educo director’s visit to Australia was not something that I would have requested at this time. It initially represented disruption to my life and thesis-writing process. But since it came into the field of my work on leadership, the event seemed appropriate both with what I was writing about (the phenomenon of leadership) and the readiness within myself to engage with a South African initiative. Ten years have passed and I have integrated well into this country. I was inwardly ready to open cultural links with South African and remember again the magnitude of the love and connection that I continue to feel with that country. In retrospect, the timing was clearly extraordinary.

Synchronicity is primarily sensed as an experience and then recognition is made of its connections. In the described story, there were a series of preternatural events that represent diverse sources. The bank and emigration department provided far more than requested; various people seemed to just appear when needed; parking spaces in mid-city were available; unanticipated resources were made available.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Jung, psychoanalyst, author and important intellectual influence of the last century, developed an extensive theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of synchronicity. This can be found in his forward to the *I Ching* edited by Richard Wilhelm, or in his *Collected Works*. He, in turn, was directly influenced about the central importance of synchronicity by the great scientist and philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg.

These fortuitous and extraordinary events certainly helped the smooth running of the organisational tasks. The continuous surprises provided a series of energy bursts which seemed to bolster the work and engagement in the project. But more than that, they were like repeated endorsements of the venture. The universe seemed to be providing for and supporting the venture. This is the action of synchronicity.

Hillman (2000) discusses the essential link between leadership and timing. 'This capacity to recognise the occasione (sic) is crucial to the exercise of leadership and grants it power over circumstances.' He compares the human action of leadership to that of an animal's, for it unites thought and action in a single gesture. Leadership for Hillman is like an instinctual drive that cannot but express itself when its time comes. It is often hidden and its power will then manifest as an influence that is more like a tilting in a direction than a force. But metaphorically it lies in hiding until its time comes, and then when its time comes, the leader will be the embodiment of ideas, a most powerful force.

The word synchronicity is being used here in relation to timing more than the coincident factor with which it is usually associated. Applying synchronicity aims at situating a particular work within one's past and future and appreciating how it contributes as an integral part of one's biography. It is about making sense of how the particular work corresponds to or is consonant with the direction one's life is taking. It can occur that a work might be embarked on that is not appropriate for any number of reasons. And in this case, it is pointless to continue for it is unlikely that a full and satisfying engagement with that work will occur. There may be subtle signals indicating the misfit or the mistiming. Sometimes these are only recognised in retrospect.

My belief is that through giving consideration to the impact of synchronicity, one is seeing the connections how a particular work or project has an integral position in the direction of one's life path. This sense making activity generates a deeper engagement that had previously been the case.

I believe that timing is an important force to be considered and not enough attention has historically been given to its substantial impact. It is an aspect of living that cannot be directly controlled, but has to be respected and incorporated. I also believe that when one's consciousness is open to the possibility, synchronicities as coincident events do occur. Like in the description given, these seem to validate a chosen pathway.

### **Unwavering willingness...Clarity of intention**

Although embarking on this venture was not part of the design of my plans, once the idea was planted, I maintained an almost unwavering attachment to the whole venture. I can liken the quality of engagement with the experience of knowing something deeply. It had a sense of the venture being seated deeply within my body accompanied by a continuous belief in the purpose of what was being undertaken. This was the foundation for the preparedness or readiness for action. This does not mean that I knew what action was needed, but rather that I was prepared to meet the challenge of finding out what was needed. From this kind of intention came a certain readiness for action. Intention therefore became mixed with deep knowing and I therefore wish to rename this phenomenon clarity of intention.

Clarity of intention is differentiated from the concept of purpose used by many authors on the subject of leadership. Jaworski (1999) refers to clarity of purpose as an essential ingredient of leadership. He relates this to terms such as 'vital design' or 'longing to serve a higher purpose'. This is more like 'life purpose' rather than simply purpose. It assumes a somewhat grandiose sense about the purpose of one's life and life designs. Other than the Mozarts of this world, it is quite seldom that people do have a sense of what their life purpose is. One may have a sense about the rightness or suitability of embarking on a particular project at a particular time, but to stretch this into the realms of higher purpose adds surreal religious expectation. I speak of something equally powerful but a more accessible notion and perhaps gentler to embrace.

Clarity of intention for taking on the role came from my belief in the nature of the work being done by Educo in South Africa, and the value of sharing the work in the Australian context. Educo makes a significant impact on youth at risk in that society, and whilst Australian society is vastly different, youth are always somewhat at risk. I believed that they could make a positive contribution to indigenous and other youth-orientated organisations. A strong connection with the director of the project also helped to maintain that clarity. Perhaps it was because there were no expectations of what the size of the undertaking would be or the nature of the support that I would offer that I was interested to watch and see where it would take me. The clarity of intention matched the absence of feeling that any certainty in approaching the task might bring. It was a peculiar mixture of opposites and yet I did not feel concerned. It was only in reading Hillman (1990) on mythological certitude that I began to appreciate the nature of the engagement that was present throughout that experience.

Hillman argues the case for a certainty of actioning that goes beyond the level of knowledge to what he calls mythological certitude. It is a response to a kind of inner drive that is as 'everyday and direct as our immediate belonging to the world' (Hillman 1990, p.225). Akin to an inner sense of certainty or inner knowing, the experience is like a responding that is closer to the instinctual or animal mind than it is to a measured or considered response. Yet it contains no objective certainty about what one is doing or is about to do. This most interesting notion has great bearing on leadership for it describes a state of operating that is present-centred and receptive.

Confined to a moment-to-moment actioning, mythological certitude is not about planning for the future or finding a formula for the best form of action. However, within each moment, discrimination and acts of choice are exercised. This is the case as long as that engagement is retained without deferring to generalisations or deductions. As soon as the moment is transcended, the mythological certitude is no longer enacted. Varela (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2000) calls this the active present. Hillman compares this state of engagement with the experience of languaging. As one's language springs forth, it comes ready-made from ourselves

as the source. It has no existence before it is spoken; usually not consciously thought through before it comes into existence; and arises spontaneously out of the body. Hillman (1990) cites Isaiah Berlin who refers to inner certainty as a sense of reality, for the reality is itself a result of mythological consciousness. It is myth that actually authorises actions as just like language, action does not derive from or require any other system of truth. This sense of certainty can be related to the instinctual world of animal minds where the world presents itself as *anima mundi*, a world endowed with soul. Spontaneous action happens when beliefs are connected with perception.

I am not trying to make a claim for appropriateness or best possible action or knowledge that might guarantee the results of the action. I am specifically not referring to the results of actions but focusing on the source of the actioning. A comparison for appreciating the source of action can be found in *Zen and the Art of Archery*. Herrigel (1985) explains how the master assessed his progress by looking at him when he shot his arrows rather than watching where the arrows fell. This reflects an inner capacity or readiness for action for which clarity of intention is an essential predisposing factor.

This state has significance and relevance for leadership where self-belief would need to be a central ingredient. With clarity of intention, a level of resonance is present in one's actioning and the capacity for engagement and presence is greatly amplified. The project discussed above had no guidelines or blueprint of expectations; my previous work appeared to offer little preparation. Fulfilling such a task would therefore require substantial creativity from others and myself.

### **Creativity as a group... Co-creativity<sup>11</sup>**

The absence of background experience in fundraising or large function coordination brought an edginess to the experience initially and the realisation that I would need help. A group of willing participants soon presented themselves. This group maintained an earnest connection with the unfolding of events, and the

<sup>11</sup> I am indebted to Allan Kaplan (2002) for the 'co-' part of this term. Whilst he uses it as 'co-creating', the idea of a social dimension to a creative response is nevertheless the same.



whole endeavour became marked by people being available for particular tasks, as they were needed. Each person seemed to find the work that most suited them. They appeared to enjoy themselves and engaged fully. I felt supported and others expressed that they felt supported by me.

In spite of the support, I found myself in many entirely new roles. This included the co-ordinating role, public speaking, introductions and more. Each one required a new stance and positioning; vulnerability was central to the experience of these roles. I had little past experience to draw on so I was forced into continuous and spontaneous creativity. This became a hallmark of the entire experience. It led me to wonder about the meaning and importance of the creative impulse in organisational work.

Current organisational writers speak of the need to be creative and do organisational change work differently from the way things were done in the past. The importance of meeting a situation afresh and not imposing old or habitual ways of operating is considered essential, because the needs of business and the world are changing so rapidly. My experience showed there is more to the idea of creativity than simply finding untried or original approaches.

Creativity seems to arise out of the connection and engagement with the work being done. A project or situation requires the participant to have a sensitivity and receptivity to the project. Through this involvement, one establishes and thereby facilitates what that particular situation requires. This is responsiveness; the capacities to be receptive and sensitive to the needs of the project and then respond to the demands that present.<sup>12</sup>

Clarity of intention is the inner preparedness a person has for a task. Co-creativity is the responsiveness to a task, both in themselves and in relevant others. This sounds simple but the capacity to suspend habitual ways of operating is never easy. It is like going against one's natural tendencies. It is therefore to the

<sup>12</sup> The use of the term 'responsive' has been influenced by Kaplan (2002). He uses the term as the capacity to first read a situation into its depths and then to awaken to the self such that the response can facilitate developmental processes.

source of our actions, in particular to the will, that it is necessary to now turn for further understanding of creativity and responsiveness.

In a recently published book on leadership, Scharmer speaks of a blind spot that is within each person (Senge 2004).<sup>13</sup> This is the source of human action, the inner place from which one operates. Whilst people are quite aware of what they do and often how they do things, this inner place is not easily known.

Scharmer bases his work on the concept that the quality of an intervention is a function of the interior condition of the intervener. This condition is the individual's presence. The blind spot is illuminated by learning to use oneself as the vehicle for the coming-into-being of one's future potential. He explains that understanding of learning has always been dependant on the Kolb model that considers learning to arise out of reflection on past experience.<sup>14</sup> He questions how people could instead use their beings or presence to have a sense of an emergent future and thus to create or manifest action out of that. This requires suspending what is currently known in the individual's thinking, feeling and willing and involves shifting from the usual reactions in judgement to opening one's thoughts as a 'gateway to perception and apprehension' (Scharmer 2002, p.8). In the feeling world, this represents a move from the usual emotional reaction to opening one's heart as a gateway to sensing. In the realm of will, the will would be inverted from being bound by old intentions and identities to 'presencing the new that wants to emerge' (Scharmer 2002, p.8).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Whilst Senge is listed as the first author of the book, I have followed the work of each of the authors through journal articles and personal contacts, and I am confident about attributing certain ideas to Scharmer and others to Jaworski and still others to Senge. Dr. C. Otto Scharmer is co-founder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Leadership Lab, lecturer at MIT, and a visiting professor at the Helsinki School of Economics. He is also co-founder of the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership.

<sup>14</sup> This is the action learning cycle whereby through reflection on experience, we may learn and thereby change our behaviour. This is the basis of Reason (1988)'s work in action learning. A historical overview of the field of experiential learning with a particular focus on Kolb, can be found at: <http://reviewing.co.uk/research/experiential.learning.htm#26>

<sup>15</sup> Scharmer is strongly influenced in his thinking by the work of Rudolf Steiner who speaks of the three aspects of man as being the thinking, feeling and willing. Human capacities and individuality are measured through their particular strength or weakness with regards to any of these functions.

He calls this ‘accessing your self’ and it is largely through the will aspect of action that he has evolved the idea of presencing. I believe that this blind spot, like the focal point out of which people operate, is the source of what I am referring to as responsiveness. Metaphorically, it is like a creative heart.

The will that Scharmer refers to is both an individual and collective phenomenon. For Scharmer, the idea of will goes far beyond the individual and yet is accessible to the individual. When the individual is open to the collective will or to what Buber (1961) calls the grand will, the higher self is a gateway for the new to emerge. Instead of drawing on one’s own will for taking action, and thereby imagining that each person is like a separate entity, one sees oneself as part of a grander network of relationship whereby the self is not apart from the other or the group or the organisation. The will acts more as receptor than actor, and the world becomes less of a final product and more as evolving and coming-into-being. In this dynamic system, each will participates in a larger will and the will becomes like an instrument of participation. Bortoft (1996, p.242) discusses Goethe’s ideas of the will:

*When the will becomes receptive, then consciousness becomes participative. It is when the will is assertive that the scientist is separated thereby from the phenomenon, and consciousness becomes onlooker consciousness.*

Co-creating with those around one is a shared actioning process. Presencing means mobilising the will to be used so that it does not act as one single isolated will, but participates in a larger, unfolding will. The place from where this action takes place is at the basis of a creative response. The action that originates here is not from the individual alone, like an artist isolated and satisfying their own sense of aesthetics, but arises out of a sense of something called into being or something that is asked for. This is presencing and its action is an illumination.

This is a complex notion that requires a great deal of work on oneself to put into action. I believe that one may sometimes recognise action that has taken place from the point of the grand will in retrospect, but a great leap of consciousness is required to invite its presence into action. What then can one do towards influencing or creating an outcome?

Scharmer has drawn heavily on Varela in developing his thesis on presencing.<sup>16</sup> There is a lively moment in an interview between Varela and Scharmer, where Scharmer questions and tries to steer towards an affirmation from Varela about the possibility of an intentionally enabling presence.<sup>17</sup> Varela, who was a practising Buddhist with an evolved comprehension of consciousness and experience through meditation and neurophysiology training, is very clear that this is not something that can be willed.<sup>18</sup> The most one can do, he claims, is to practise becoming aware so that one can be operate as a channel that allows things to happen. The capacity for presence cannot be bound in ego-consciousness. As long as the ego interferes with words such as: ‘ah yes, I’m actively presencing’, or one tries to enable presence, then one clearly is not. In the moment of bringing the ego into the equation, one is no longer involved fully in any of the three steps of gesturing in awareness, or therefore presencing.

In order to explicate this further, I would like to go back to the source of this information, Varela’s thesis on awareness to understand the place of the will in the coming-into-awareness.<sup>19</sup> I believe this cycle is at the basis of any creative action. Varela talks about this epoche as including the reflexive/redirection and the reception/letting-go.<sup>20</sup> The first is characterised by a turning in on oneself and the second is characterised by an opening up to oneself. Whilst they are both rooted in a pre-reflective consciousness, the first has intentionality and Varela (Depraz, Varela & Vermersch 2000) therefore refers to it as the cognitive axis of becoming aware, where the will is used. The second axis is considered an involuntary dimension of experience and the gesture of letting go is like the revelation of a receptive availability, the affective axis. Noticing the cognitive and affective dimensions, the reception and letting go, the reflexive and redirection show the complexity of capturing such an experience.

<sup>16</sup> The book *Presence* is formally dedicated to Varela. In general, I notice that much of Scharmer’s terminology and ideas have been drawn from Varela. This is particularly prevalent in the concept of presence and the use of what he calls the theory of the U which appears to be directly adapted from Varela’s work on the coming into awareness.

<sup>17</sup> This was one of a series of interviews that Otto Scharmer conducted on leadership. The interview with Varela can be found at: <http://www.dialogonleadership.org/interviewVarela.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Francesco Varela died in 2002.

<sup>19</sup> This is an extension of the discussion in chapter six on Varela’s thesis of change and the Gesture of Awareness

<sup>20</sup> The notion of ‘epoche’ is discussed in chapter six.

It is based in experience and rooted in intention. Without the primary intention, it cannot occur. It is voluntary and yet it requires giving way to the involuntary. It is therefore a rather paradoxical system; both complex to describe and complex to learn. Co-creativity recognises that any response is not a private phenomenon but always includes others' creativities.

Within the described story of the Educo event, there were frequent occasions when my normal reaction was suspended and the space was made for integrating others' participation in the venture. Whilst my tendency previously would have been to control most aspects of the arrangements, I frequently let go to make space for others. I noticed a curiosity within myself about the unfolding of the events. As I found myself taking on roles that I could not even visualise for myself, I saw that maintaining my usual ways of operating would have compromised many aspects of the whole event.

## **Confluent Leadership**

The examination of the three constellations, synchronicity, clarity of intention and co-creativity, has been described in breadth and depth. Whilst each has been considered separately, their influences certainly overlap. It may be impossible to tell which constellation is being enacted at a particular time, simply or in concert, individually or in combination. The three constellations explored in these pages have come to make an essential contribution to a new and emergent framework. Each constellation can be seen as a major source of influence on how one operates in one's leadership. These are being enacted whether one is aware of them or not. With the experience of leadership now described in relation to the influences of these three constellations, I have called this phenomenon a constellational understanding of leadership.

The centre where they overlap is a place or point from which one operates; this point is present as the source of action, the confluence of the three constellations. This is a point of leadership or a place from which leadership operates. It comes about through making the influence of these constellations conscious. They then

provide a gateway to a kind of authorship or authority whose influence goes beyond the individual and into the collective. This is Confluent Leadership.<sup>21</sup>

The concept, 'con' + 'fluent', is derived from two words, consciousness and influence. It involves enacting one's leadership or authoring one's actions through the consciousness of the influence of the three constellations. Furthermore, this is not an achievement to be reached but an ongoing way of reflecting on operating that is expansive bringing learning and growth to one's practice.

The phenomenon of confluent leadership makes no assumptions concerning how one should behave or what ought to be done. Confluent leadership cannot be ordered or demanded, although its presence will be noticed. One of its manifestations will be a spread of leadership through many levels of an organisation, for the confluent leader takes on the role as a channel not as a single hero leadership figure. Such a leader is responsive to the need for others to bring their leadership to bear. They are aware of and sensitive to their relationships with the various aspects of the job, and are ready and responsive to take and share personal and collective responsibility.

This leader embodies their role because their thoughts, feelings and wills are aligned. This is expressed in the leader understanding and having clarity about why they are in their particular role. There is the realisation that the influences of the constellations continue and change as circumstances change, therefore the process of working with one's conscious awareness of the influences is ongoing.

In *The Dance of Change*, Senge (1999) introduced the idea of leadership that is generative. In a conversation on the web (Senge 2001), he says the following about generativity:

*The essential insight for me is that we are getting closer to understanding the generative territory at the heart of all leadership...the capacity to sustain change that brings forth new realities in line with people's genuine aspirations*

<sup>21</sup> This word is not listed in the major dictionaries. In searching the web through Google, I found it is used commercially. The word was entirely of my own creation.

Generative leadership bears similarities to confluential leadership. I believe that they are part of a prevailing genre of leadership understanding, where consciousness and responsiveness supersede a prescriptive kind of leadership; where leadership is understood as a presence in the workplace which enables others' leadership to manifest or disables and controls; where financial acquisition and the appearance of a harmonious environment are not enough. I notice that Senge has provided little description or details about generative leadership. Bringing consciousness into leadership means crossing genre paradigms, and at this early stage it may be best to say less about its manifestation and recognisability. Just like the nature of leadership, the preparation is in place and the remainder relies on the conscious responsiveness that the leader carries in relation to their environment.

### **The application of these ideas**

I wish now to address the practical value of this evolving theoretical discussion. How can these constellations be used? Who would benefit from the application? What are the effects of their application?

The following are ideas in transition based on some early pilot studies by the author. I begin with the following assumptions. A practitioner is any person engaged in a particular work, project, job, role or position at whatever level. An interest in improving practice through embracing their role more wholeheartedly is already an expression of a person's leadership. This simple assertion of intention to improve is a reflection of the leadership of the practitioner.<sup>22</sup>

The practitioner applies the three constellations to the current experience of their work through an honest and open scrutiny of themselves in relation to the work. This is enabled through carefully designed and facilitated experiential workshops providing adult learning processes.<sup>23</sup> This learning process can be seen as a

<sup>22</sup> These ideas are original. I have not seen them stated elsewhere although they may appear in other writings. They provide a useful resolution to the idea that leadership is a capacity available to anyone who chooses it. Leadership therefore has to include the act of willing.

<sup>23</sup> In adult learning practices, knowledge formation is built based on one's experience. The methodology of learning is not hierarchical but assumes respect for each adult learner.

human research inquiry for it enables experiential learning and greater awareness of the influences on one's leadership to impact on one's development.<sup>24</sup> Through this process, the barriers to a fuller engagement as well as the gaps and strengths of one's engagement, become apparent. Hence, the practitioner develops a more conscious appreciation of their experience of their work/life.<sup>25</sup> This may lead to a realisation that the particular work is not personally suitable, with an understanding of why this is the case. Reason (1988) says that this kind of learning leads to the promotion of human welfare. This style of learning is consistent with the idea that leadership can be learnt rather than taught. The extent of the value of this learning is dependant on the willingness of the practitioner to self-reflect with depth and personal honesty.

### **The breadth of the constellations**

The following are the kinds of questions associated with each constellation. These are not simply answered but form the basis of complex workshop situations using diagrams, reflective tools and group and individual exercises which provide the basis for their careful and detailed consideration. These questions provide guidelines for the direction that might be taken for each constellation. Each constellation is examined substantially and from many perspectives.

### **Synchronicity**

- How does this project/job/event appear to fit into your life right now?
- What aspects of your past work/life lead you to this work?
- How is this project/job/event part of your future planning/ideas?
- What events about your life seem to support/not support this venture?

<sup>24</sup> Reason (1988) says experiential learning can be seen as the relationship between personal development and inquiry. Personal experience is taken as the touchstone of a valid psychological inquiry.

<sup>25</sup> This penetrative reflective work will inevitably impact work and personal aspects of life.



### **Clarity of Intention**

- When you consider your work/job/position, what is your gut response?
- Describe how you feel about this project/job/event (even though you may not know how you will meet its requirements).
- What is the quality of your relationships with others?
- What are the various aspects of this project/job and how do you relate to each one?

### **Co-creativity**

- What is your particular way of operating?
- How do you interact with and enable others on this project?
- Are you open to evolving responsive processes as needed for the success of this project or job to occur?

The three constellations are like invitations to consider different influences on one's life and work life. The first examines how the particular work has come into one's life and how it therefore fits into one's life biography. The second studies one's attitudes to the many aspects of the particular work. The third considers how one works, both from oneself and through others.

### **The three constellations and the original research**

The creation of the three constellations represents an evolution of my ideas and understanding of leadership. Now that it has been formulated, I am interested to examine the extent to which the conditions for their conceptualisation were present in the earlier inquiry into leadership written up in Chapter 2. In consideration of the questions and the process used in the case study described in Chapter 1, the constellations were inherently contained in the initial questions which inquired about each practitioner's sense of their own leadership. Whilst there is not a direct bridging, the five categories of experience, sense of self, quality of relationships, responsibility for action, enjoyment of work, and openness to growth and change can be seen to co-exist within the three constellations. The constellations are a higher order explanation of an inquiry into leadership.

## Triangulation or Crystallisation

In considering the development of my thinking and the ideas of confluential leadership that have here been advanced, I am tempted to consider Chapter 8 as the third part of a triangulation of ideas about leadership.<sup>26</sup> Triangulation is the use of multiple methods to study a particular problem (Polkinghorne 1983, p.253).<sup>27</sup>

In the organisation of this thesis, the Chapters 2, 3 & 4 constitute the psychological research and development of a fitting research process to assess leadership in an organisation; the second part, Chapters 5, 6 & 7 are literature reviews and literary and imaginative essays expanding the phenomenon of leadership; and this chapter establishes a philosophical phenomenology of leadership. There are resonances and similarities in relation to the content developed and aspects of the method that inter-relate between the three parts. I suspect that I could make a case for triangulation of the ideas of leadership, thereby justifying the conclusions reached. However, the justification of similitude is not as interesting as appreciating the particular contribution that each aspect makes to the developing phenomenon of leadership. It is more than a cumulative process, for the results of earlier investigations have combined with and enhanced the actual methods used in the later research. I thus wish to turn to a more effective metaphor for the continued building of a conceptual framework, and this is the crystal.<sup>28</sup>

Crystals form under pressure in the earth and are hundreds of years in formation. They reflect and refract and change and grow. They are multi-faceted. Like a hologram or the cells of the body, each aspect contains and is a reflection of other aspects and yet the overarching form of each crystal is unique.

<sup>26</sup>The word, triangulation, comes from the geological techniques of locating a point through creating a triangle around it.

<sup>27</sup> Triangulation is being used here as a process between methods, where many methods are used for the same phenomenon. One can also consider triangulation as something within methods whereby varieties of the same method are applied to a phenomenon.

<sup>28</sup> I borrow the metaphor of crystal and the method of crystallisation from Richardson (1997, p.136).

Capturing the framework of leadership and generating the three constellations has been a profound experience and represents a formulation that connects many strands of my thinking and theorising. These ideas have been in formation for an extended period of time. Much of my thesis must seem conspicuous in its personal resistance to being drawn into a specific definition of leadership. I now have found a way of approaching leadership whereby a person's individuality is intact and yet there are guidelines for understanding and deepening one's experience of leadership. This truly represents a crystallisation of my thinking and it has the added capacity of being able to refract and reflect on experience.

Furthermore, this new framework is an evolution of ideas and thus more than the accumulation of the previous chapters' work. The earlier work has been instrumental in building to this step, and the results of that work have their own external validity. This work has taken the breadth and depth of the previous steps and incorporated a new dimension.

How can one validate a crystal? I wish to follow here with a few ideas that lean towards validation.

- This is the first conceptualisation or crystallisation of a way of thinking about leadership with which I find that I can deeply resonate.
- The resultant conceptual framework about leadership appears to be a higher order conceptualisation of ideas that were already present in the earlier chapters.
- Early pilot work in the field is proving engaging and useful to participants. This has been found on both a formal and informal basis.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

*...so the researcher, in directing attention exclusively to the phenomenon, is in fact surrendering to the phenomenon, making a space for it to appear as itself.*

Bortoft (1996 p.242)

The greatest impediment to understanding a thing or phenomenon comes from the need to explain it in terms of something else. Explanation results in each thing becoming an instance or example that can analytically be seen to 'belong' to a group, perhaps a bit more or less like that group. This level of analysis immediately loses the particular context of the thing or phenomenon, for it is separated from what it was originally reflecting. Meaning then has to be put back into the phenomenon. The attempt to explain that particular occurrence further separates the researcher from the phenomenon, as the researcher has to stand apart from the phenomenon in the explanation. Explanation is highly effective when computing or analyzing a chemical make up of a substance but with a sensitive and human subject such as leadership, does not result in a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Comparing styles of leadership or espousing what it requires to be an effective leader are examples of explanations that create a web of beliefs in a seemingly objective state of leadership that can somehow be gained or achieved.

Understanding a phenomenon is a way of grasping it as a whole. Wittgenstein (in Bortoft 1996, p.304) also describes understanding as the seeing of the connections intrinsic to the phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> He appreciates this kind of seeing as an imaginative capacity, operating beyond the senses, and demanding a particular level of engagement in the researcher to be receptive to the phenomenon in its wholeness. This thesis has strived to gain a comprehensive understanding of leadership whilst maintaining its wholeness and its context as a human endeavour.

<sup>1</sup> It is most interesting to note that Monk in his biography of Wittgenstein discusses the radical influence of Goethe on Wittgenstein. The result of Wittgenstein's encounter with Goethe was the basis for the transition and radical difference between his earlier work and his later work.

The methods employed in this thesis have been determined and shaped by the appreciation of leadership as a particularly human experience which can only be understood comprehensively within the context in which it occurs. This idea has directed my own stance and positioning as researcher as I have reached towards the phenomenon within its particular manifestation, with the wish to understand it. The reaching means that I have opened myself towards allowing the phenomenon to reveal itself. My methods of engagement include consciously reading a situation, and then writing and reflecting on the phenomenon in a conversational or action learning cycle. I believe therefore that my method constitutes a genuine inquiry into leadership, serving an understanding of leadership for itself.

This inquiry is an applied work. The methods of continuously working with actual experience have been applied rigorously and consistently. Whilst the work is largely phenomenological, it is not classically phenomenological for the methods have been adopted and created to suit the research intentions and the subject of leadership, rather than the research slavishly following a predetermined method. This work lies in the Hillman or Bachelard traditions where reverie and imagination are applied methodologically and enable both the intuiting and constituting of meaning. The empirical world is deeply engaged with and then surpassed as new possibilities of existence are projected. The engagement is through conversational processes and the continuous submission and surrender to the phenomenon. The immersion of the researcher is at the core of these methods.

I began the thesis struck by how the engagement in a conversation appeared to manifest a kind of leadership that flowed out of the space that was created between another and myself. The play of conversation provided the fertile field from which a profound understanding and recognition emerged. However it became clear that what emerges depends on that which each person brings into the conversation. This is a strange irony that is really at the heart of the phenomenological methods and is well described by the concept of intentionality, the correlation of what is experienced with the way it is experienced or the correlation of what appears (the phenomenon) with how it appears. The methods of investigation are therefore continuously intrinsic to that which is found.

Although bringing a phenomenological method to a subject such as leadership was an unusual way to proceed, indeed I have not been able to locate any other specifically phenomenological study done on leadership, I believe these methods have enabled a wealth of investigative practices that preserve and defend the complexity of leadership.<sup>2</sup> The levels of transformation and depth of understanding of the topic that have been enabled are inconceivable through other methods of inquiry.

At the basis of the phenomenological methods lies an inherent appreciation and respect for the individual and their experience. This quality was loyally maintained through each aspect of the theoretical development. This includes my experience as researcher, which was conscientiously examined for motivation and intention in each step of the journey of inquiry.

The work was not driven by particular outcomes. And yet, almost unexpectedly, results have emerged that provide both theoretical insights and practical wisdom. In this concluding chapter, I would like to discuss some of the key developments focusing on the more powerful theoretical and practical outcomes that have emerged.

## **Leadership Findings**

### **Organisational leadership enabled through individual leadership**

The case study of the first early chapters exemplified a way of inquiry that in each phase of the research honoured and expressed the leadership of the individual. From the outset both managers and staff were encouraged in the inquiry as if co-researchers.<sup>3</sup> This stimulated their engagement and finally realised organisational leadership.

<sup>2</sup> I have conducted searches on Duquesne doctoral dissertation topics as well as in the Journal of Phenomenological Psychology. I have also inquired of the librarian at Duquesne University, recognised as the foremost academic institution using phenomenological research. There are many qualitative research studies on leadership that bare similarity to a phenomenological study in that they have built theory largely based on experiential data. This can be seen in the works of Scharmer, Goffee and Jones, Jaworski, Senge.

<sup>3</sup> They are not strictly co-researchers as they have not participated in designing the study and the topics. However, insofar as they are having a stake in influencing the direction of the organisation, their input has a collaborative aspect.

The quality of the individual engagement was marked by an enthusiasm and responsiveness. Almost every interviewee was forthcoming in their intention to describe their experience fully and appeared to value being listened to. This was confirmed by the enthusiasm with which they returned to each round of interviews at six monthly intervals. Many said that simply participating in the research was a clarifying and integrating experience. The in-depth engagement with the cross-section of individuals provided the range of leadership issues and this is a reflection of engaging their individual leadership. The use of composite narratives was a technique to capture these and yet bring forth the individuals' voice and leadership in such a way that they could be easily identifiable by the collective. Composite narratives offer imaginative redescriptions of experience. The composites shift the emphasis away from theory building, as evaluation reports tend to do, towards an accessible connecting process that prepared the way for consensual and emergent change.

The choice to radicalise the analysis by transforming the data into a dramatic format was not taken lightly. A straightforward thematic analysis would have resulted in a neat and accurate representation and would probably have satisfied the client.<sup>4</sup> The researchers, believing that an animated analysis would capture the individual experience in a holistic format, took considerable risk in this regard. Although Polkinghorne (1995) inspired the basic narrative form, the leap into the composite or combined narrative is a unique aspect of this analysis. For myself as researcher, this was an enlivening and satisfying process of creation. It was my first experience as a playwright; through finding my voice as a member of staff or management and then writing in that voice, I understood and appreciated the issues more than ever from the viewpoint of the participants.

The reactions to the report comprising the narratives were unanimous. All the participants in the study, over 45 people, actually read the final report and offered comments like "I couldn't put it down"; the union members were satisfied that it reflected the state of affairs fairly; the Human Resources Manager said, 'it's

<sup>4</sup> I have noticed that generally one or two interested managers read such reports and then they are left to gather dust on the shelves.

brilliant'; the silence that comes from being touched descended after the dramatic rendition. New conversations emerged between staff and management. Finally, after the report had been heard and discussed, action for the forward direction of the organisation was taken consensually.

The narratives had achieved several goals far beyond a simple evaluation. Each person was able to identify themselves in the narratives and also see the position of the collective. It is difficult to name exactly what the study did achieve: perhaps mirroring the collective in a way that is audible and accessible is a close enough assessment. A new level of leadership and readiness was present in that group of people after the closing presentation and discussions.

Clearly, for the managers and staff, this work had mattered. Whilst the case study was simple in its methodology, it was profound in its consequences for the organisation. The participants were deeply engaged in the process and felt that their participation made a difference. A level of trust across the board was enabled and this was manifest in the preparedness of managers and staff to take the next steps together. Communications were certainly improved and this was verbally acknowledged. The final validation of this work to the organisation was the invitation to the researchers to return and conduct an identical study to evaluate another more extensive leadership program for the team leaders.<sup>5</sup>

This research was conducted as an evaluation and yet resulted in an actual developmental process. Development can be defined from a community development perspective as a responsive process that enables and facilitates the resourcefulness of people. Kaplan (1996 p.89) takes this idea further with '...the essential work of the development practitioner is to facilitate the consciousness of individuals, communities and nations through the medium of people's

<sup>5</sup> The idea of another program for the team leaders had in fact been one of the recommendations of this study. This transpired and the new study had double the number of participants and many who had attended the previous study. The difference between the two research studies was the client's wish for ongoing outcomes from the study to be relayed to the organisation. The research and the new leadership program were proceeding until after about a year and half, when two thirds of the way through the study and the leadership program, the company was amalgamated with an American company; the program and the study were instantly concluded and most of the management were shipped overseas!



organisations'. The intrinsic connection between research (as human inquiry) and development expedites leadership within the organisational setting. This was reflected in the consensual action forward.

What transpired through this study reflects the trend seen in the current leadership literature with the demise of a hero leadership model (Senge 1999) and its hierarchical control over a collective that is expected to be malleable and compliant. I can see this work is now in good company with an increasing number of writings showing that the collective is best served by considering the individual with their needs, dreams and capacities for personal or inner leadership.

### **Leadership: it's a 'doing' thing!**

That the theory of a confluential approach to leadership should emerge as the seventh chapter of this thesis is at once so obvious, and yet also strangely profound. The play of synchronicities has a ring of absurdity. It appeared to 'do' itself.

Let me tell a secret: From the very beginning of this thesis, I have been resistant to strictly defining either leadership or the experience of leadership. I refused to make leadership into a thing, a noun. I stood my ground and continuously insisted that each person has the right to their particular experience of leadership and resorting to standardisations is not useful. The role of researcher is to hear and appreciate each person's experience as it manifests for them and in accordance with their verbal report. When I had the experience described in Chapter 8, I did not realise that it held the ingredients for an approach to leadership (not quite a definition) that could stand the test of the experience of many people.

Through an in-depth engagement with my narrative description of the leadership experience, I stayed within its complexity and drew out its essential ingredients. The unfolding of the experience eventually led to the discovery of the three constellations, synchronicity, clarity of intention and co-creativity that were inherently part and parcel of my leadership experience. I surmise these are intrinsic to others' leadership experiences. The conscious recognition of the

influence of these constellations, itself an ongoing process, I now call the confluential theory of leadership. The application of the confluential theory of leadership maintains leadership with a fluid and continuously developing nature. There is no arrival point; rather a dynamic action that engages the will. This configuration of leadership has made leadership into a verb rather than a noun.<sup>6</sup>

Confluential leadership reflects a crystallisation of my understanding of leadership. Like a crystal, reflecting and refracting one's experience causes it to brighten rather than lacklustre through analysis. In spite of crystal being hard and sharp, crystals are also alive and continuously in a process of becoming more crystalline. The perspective of the confluential approach is that the act of becoming more conscious of the influences on one's actions leads to a greater embodiment of and thereby a sharper engagement with one's leadership.

Confluential leadership represents a method of approaching and developing leadership for practitioners in accordance with both their individual will and the collective will.<sup>7</sup> Practitioners include the CEO, management, other members of the organisation, or an individual in private practice. I believe it may benefit any practitioner who wishes to enhance their experience of leadership through methods that are non-coercive and correspond with an adult education perspective. Learning consists of becoming conscious of the influence of the three constellations: synchronicity, clarity of intention and co-creativity.<sup>8</sup>

Confluential leadership enables the practitioner (including managers or leaders) to be increasingly aware of where their performance and capacities are enabled and where the possible shortcomings in their relationship with their position or role may be. A reassessment of their leadership is encouraged and this renewed consciousness gives rise to a sense of greater responsibility as the author of their position. In turn, this leads to a more confluential form of personal and/or positional leadership.

<sup>6</sup> The profound differentiation of verbal and noun-like natures is from Cooper (1997).

<sup>7</sup> Confluential is a phrase adapted and created by the author. As discussed in Chapter 8, it is the combination of consciousness & influential. It is also the individual at the confluence of the three constellations.

<sup>8</sup> These terms are carefully defined and do not correspond directly with dictionary definitions.

The application of this work is still in its early stages. I have found that in applying the three constellations to my own work and projects, I am more in touch with my leadership as a living phenomenon. This is not about judging capacity or incapacity but appreciating with increasing curiosity how and why particular situations seem to generate more satisfaction. Through working with them, my own work life is evolving with a growing sense of meaning and self-assurance and is leading to a stronger inclination to present myself for roles of leadership.

Reports from colleagues show these constellations do offer the individual valuable insight into their work roles and thereby enable appropriate forward action.

This theory has been piloted with Business Management students and their feedback has honed the methods of working with the constellations. I believe the constellations have the potential for impressive work in leadership development. An executive coaching organisation in Sydney is showing great interest in using this as their leadership model. The exact format for presenting this theory in the corporate arena is yet to be designed.

## **Leadership Methodologically**

### **Writing as method**

The nature of phenomenological work is complex. It lies between an intellectual enterprise and an artistic one, seemingly requiring both skills concurrently. It also demands a level of honest reflection in the attempt to explicate the process of accessing the phenomenon. Although phenomenology itself is defined as a method, it is considered to be without specific techniques and the writing and reflecting process is centrally fused into the research activity. The nature of the writing is thus an integral part of the research process as it shows the re-thinking and revisiting of one's reflections, toward achieving understanding.

I have used reflective writing, also called phenomenological writing, as a medium of self-discovery like an ongoing experiment in thinking aloud (Van Manen 1990). A variety of writing features that extends the work in non-traditional directions are distinctive to this thesis. These include writing my personal experience about the research as narratives; continuous reference back to my own

and other's actual experience through the writing; frequent use of reverie as an imaginative deepening of the phenomenon in its context. These provide utilitarian functions such as reflexivity, which McIntyre (1998) says results from the examination of the researcher's physical being and meaning-making processes and is sometimes referred to as the touchstone of qualitative research. The reflective writing also provides a pedagogical function, whereby the reader and qualitative researchers can get a felt sense of this type of work. Finally it was hoped that these features would also bring an aesthetic and enlivening dimension to the thesis.

This work believes in the contingency of stated ideas. In agreement with Rorty (1989), my interest is not in stating any great truths, but rather in stimulating ongoing reflections and conversations, not in arriving at final theories but in building ongoing reflective understandings. This way of operating is based in the writing as the medium and the method for the ongoing reflections. I believe this approach has well served the phenomenon of leadership by respecting and valuing its unknowable and its individualistic nature.

### **Imagination provides an instrument of truth**

The language of organisations tends to speak of leadership as an abstract and therefore unattainable state. Many tools have been employed in this thesis to reflect on and stay with the experience in order to bring leadership into an inhabitable world.<sup>9</sup> It is a peculiar irony that the imagination provides such a function. I would like to discuss how the use of dreaming as a creative act and reverie as a tool of reflecting, make this possible.

A definition of phenomenology discussed earlier was that phenomenology is the clarification of the lived world.<sup>10</sup> The phenomenologist practices 'a kind of fidelity to experience' (Romanyshyn 2000, p.1) and the use of reverie provides that intensification and clarification at strategic research points throughout the thesis. In a way that is not ethereal, the reverie offers an explicit and substantial

<sup>9</sup> The idea of inhabitable and abstract states comes from Thiboutot (2001).

<sup>10</sup> See footnote in Introduction page 7.

picture of what to expect when meeting the work of leadership. It thus brings a transparent and accessible sense of the lived nature of the phenomenon of leadership making the reading a lived experience.

Dreaming is understood as the basis of all change.<sup>11</sup> It was appreciated as intrinsic in the process of understanding and expediting awareness through Varela's three gestures; Chapter 8 showed the possibility for using the dreaming in a conscious way in order to enhance leadership. The nature of change, as dreaming, could challenge and inspire organisational leaders to rethink their current policies and practices.

Dreaming, as reverie, was applied in an experimental way to look afresh at leadership in Chapter 5. Its application assisted in gaining insight into the change that transpired in South Africa. Changes that could not be explained causally or rationally needed the use of dreaming to provide new and unexpected explanatory possibilities. The dreaming can show connections between seemingly unrelated events. As Bachelard (1987) notes, reverie enlarges our lives by admitting us into the secrets of the universe. When a straightforward causal understanding cannot be found, reverie as dreaming can provide unexpected and lateral approaches. However, the use of dreaming and reverie as tools in organisational research is in its infancy with its use limited to transpersonal research.<sup>12</sup> This is unfortunate, as this work has shown how the imagination has been a practical and constructive force in these methodologies. I look forward to it having a place in more general applications.

<sup>11</sup> It is usually in retrospect that one appreciates how the change one sees was being 'dreamed up' over time. It often requires a great and subtle level of insight to sense changes as they are occurring.

<sup>12</sup> This work could be considered within transpersonal research methods. The use of phenomenology, dreaming and aspects of inquiry can be situated within intuitive and organic inquiry methods. I have chosen to orientate this work in the phenomenological, organisational and narrative paradigms.

### **It takes leadership to give rise to leadership**

This central theoretical principle that has emerged is significant for research purposes and for the further understanding of leadership. At once so simple, it is beautifully captured by the luminous quotation that begins this chapter, ‘...the researcher, in directing attention exclusively to the phenomenon, is in fact surrendering to the phenomenon, making a space for it to appear as itself’ (Bortoft 1996, p.242). This captures the spirit and the method of the entire thesis. Each aspect of the journey has been a process of opening myself intellectually and emotionally to the meaning of leadership as an experience. This has brought forth the phenomenon, often in unexpected ways.

In the case study, the researchers cultivated a receptive attitude in each aspect of the study. It began in the interviewing, continued into the data analysis and then in the report delivery. This principle was present in the theoretical development of confluential leadership where a patient inquiry into an event of leadership brought forth the major constellations for leadership. The sudden manifestation of a leadership role (Chapter 8) at a vital point of the thesis creation was a subtle and powerful event.

This idea is especially present through the nature of the relationship between the researchers and interviewees. Through the researchers modelling of a genuine inquiry in how they were present to the interviewees, this same quality was stimulated in the interviewees to look again into their own work life experience. This is a rich insight for general research, which frequently espouses an inquiring disposition, but the results and conclusions are held as assumptions initially and there is little real discovery.

Only a genuine inquiry with an attitude of curiosity can give rise to emergent results. The researchers began and maintained an unknowing, almost naïve quality of open inquiry, inviting participants to describe their experience of themselves at work. This was also the case with the data analysis where the researchers received and were directed by the data rather any prior conceptualisation of how the leadership in this organisation ought to appear.

Leadership as a phenomenon was constantly held within as a primary intention or orientation. This inquiry principle was also reflected in the behaviour of the researchers. In modelling a present-centred attitude, it encouraged this same quality to manifest in the participants as they re-examined their experience of their work-life.

The results of this research were forged because of the creation of relationship between teller and listener. The individual stories were told genuinely and at length because each person felt inherently respected and supported in the conversation. The quality of the relationship or engagement created between researcher and participant was essential, significant and vitalising to the process.

### **Understanding towards change**

As discussed in Chapter 6, most attempts to change an organisation tend to change the structure for the sake of achieving particular pre-established goals. Maturana's theory of autopoiesis (1987) suggests that the identity of the organisation is the hub around which the structure of the environment and its relationships revolve. To bring about change therefore, the focus needs to be with the organisational identity. The appreciation of the organisational identity is tantamount to achieving an understanding of the organisation. The understanding is for the organisation in itself, within its own context and from the inside out. From this point of understanding change can be easily facilitated.

The inquiry process of the study provided a mirror through which participants could grasp their organisational identity afresh. The narratives unfolded the identity of the organisation in an audible way. In this environment, the recommendations for change had arisen in the conversations and emerged seamlessly from the participants and their conversations (see Appendix B). The organisational study resulted in a level of listening where the major players as managers and staff could appreciate and hear what the other were saying. The recommendations were implemented with consensual agreement from

participants.<sup>13</sup> There was no imposition of change. The study showed how the understanding and appreciation of the organisational identity by the members in the organisation enables seamless change.

### **A new way of seeing ... leadership**

A way of seeing, where the nature of the object is not separate from the subject or the experiencer and is also not separable from the method, is what I have tried to offer in this thesis. My method has been to open myself, as a receptive vessel to the phenomenon under scrutiny and find what it offers. I would like to believe that I have achieved even a glimmer of what Goethe, through Bortoft (1996) alludes to by the word 'surrender'. It implies a letting go of what is held or what one is usually attached to, towards embracing what the phenomenon offers; a knowing that emerges based on ongoing dynamic and imaginative acts of observation and reflection. This is a way of seeing that brings the new through insight and understanding. In the beginning of the thesis I spoke of carrying a thoughtful orientation. I am still thoughtful, although perhaps more humble in my understanding of this way of seeing, and appreciative for having learnt a little along the way. My engagement with the phenomenology of leadership continues implicitly in my professional and personal life.

### **Where does this now leave me?**

In retrospect I realize that the particular approach taken in the thesis clearly reflects the way I bring my own leadership in the world. I attempt to be present to the other and for the other. I try and approach my work and relationships with a genuine respect for the experience of the other and tend towards being elicitive and enabling in my communications. My teaching is directed to facilitating learning using various dialogic and writing methods that draw an engaged and in depth inquiry mode in the other. I create methods that invite each person to draw on their experience towards discovering their own learning needs.

<sup>13</sup> The theoretical development of Gareth Morgan (1993) in his excellent book *Imaginization* is underpinned by this reasoning.



As I put many of the ideas created in this thesis more consciously into practice, I find the continuous challenge is to encourage others and myself out of our well-versed responses and engage with the living world of actual experience. The habitual abides in the structure of language; like a holding pattern it deflects lateral conceptualisation or original reflection on experience. I am continuously seeking the means to break this pattern; conversation or the use of dialogue is one entry point; rapid writing is a further process that takes the practitioner outside of their internal language editor. These methods liberate the language of experience, alluded to in Chapter 6; a place of inner leadership, where a response arises freely and undefended as a clear reflection of one's needs or desires; a place of learning and growing. This is where my thesis began and this is the work that I will continue to do. It is the reflection of my own passion and seems to stimulate others' passions too.

Developing qualitative research skills has stimulated a growing interest in the possibilities of this field for personal development. In particular, my interest is in teaching qualitative research skills to practitioners of all professions to stimulate and encourage practitioner research as an ongoing aspect of their practice.<sup>14</sup> Thus far I have had the opportunity of teaching practitioner research skills to counsellors and psychotherapists. It has been experienced as leadership learning. A research perspective keeps one awake to one's projections and ensures continuing conscious and enlivening reflections on one's practice. Perhaps I am an idealist, as my father once claimed, but this is my answer to the fundamentalist mind that appears to be sweeping our human ranks with a force that is out of control.

The thesis has been a process of confirmation and provided many life-changing transformational insights and methodological routes for reflection. It has impacted directly on my lifestyle and vocation. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have engaged with this meaningful topic in such depth. I hope and pray that the work that has been completed will be useful to others and our professional communities of practice.

<sup>14</sup> In this regard I am particularly drawn to the work of McLeod (1999).

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## **Appendix A: Interview questions**

### **Sense of Self**

- Think back over the last few days to an experience that illustrates how you work.
- Is there anything about that experience that you would do differently in the future?
- I am keen to know what this may tell you about yourself?
- What do you like about how you work?
- I want you to think about how you are perhaps different from others?
- What are the particular challenges that you face in how you work?

### **Enjoyment of Work**

- Help me to understand what constitutes enjoyable experience at work?
- If I were a close associate, would I recognise that you were enjoying your work by seeing you performing your tasks? What would I notice?
- What constitutes an enjoyable day at work?
- Help me to understand what prevents that enjoyment?

### **Quality of relationships**

- What would a close associate see or observe about the way you work?
- Tell me about a time when you had to influence a team.
- What do you imagine those close to you think about you?
- How do you experience the quality of your relationships (above, below, same level)

### **Sense of personal capacity/responsibility**

- Can you help me to understand the trust you feel or do not feel to make the decisions that you believe are needed?
- Do you have the opportunity to take responsibility when it's needed?
- I want you to think about whether you feel effective in what you are doing? What are the signs? What would another notice?
- I would like to know whether you feel supported in the current organisational culture?
- Does this culture promote your self-belief?

### **Openness to growth and change**

- Tell me about a recent event that demonstrates your openness to growth and change?
- I want you to think about any aspect of your operating that you may change in the future?
- How could the current organisational culture be changed into a form you would prefer?

## Appendix B: Recommendations in the report

1. The leadership-program has been profoundly important for the majority of the leadership team. The key elements of positive change are:
  - team work is high priority
  - inter-group communication is excellent
  - conflict resolution is managed in a skilled and effective manner
  - an approach to leadership has been developed which is judged to be positive for all concerned and which offers a positive corporate culture
  - proactive leadership is now common
  - enjoyment of work and increased personal understanding are characteristic of ones professional stance.

The intention was always that this change process would begin with the leadership group and that this would be followed by a cascading effect that would be experienced throughout the refinery. At the time of the final interviews, this had only happened to a limited degree with the resulting resentment of a large proportion of the work force.

*It is recommended that (1) this experience of significant benefit to the leadership group and poor “cascading down”, be openly and frankly communicated to the organisation; (2) a systematic process of two-way communication exploring expectations of leadership be opened; and (3) there is the acknowledgment that technical and communication issues are the domain of everyone.*

2. The overall culture of the refinery is very receptive to the changed attitudes and behaviours of the leadership team. This finding was evidenced by:
  - the willingness of everyone to engage in two-way communication and to value the respective role and responsibilities of the leaders
  - the expressed desire that the leaders lead. This was not a wish for authoritarian behaviours, rather, it was wanting the leaders to “take a stand” and to argue their case openly and forcefully
  - the belief that the leaders are technically very strong and that they want the best for the refinery.

*It is recommended that the leadership team: (1) acknowledge the historical existence of a them-and-us culture; (2) acknowledge that this culture is still present but that it is now a source of serious concern; and (3) explore, in a systematic manner and within integrated groups, how this problem should best be addressed.*

3. The orientation of the organisation towards peak performance as a business enterprise has been considerably enhanced. This judgment is based on:
  - the superior effectiveness of strategic meetings
  - the absence of “toxic interaction” within the leadership team
  - the newly found capacity of the leadership team to support innovative business ideas
  - the capacity to manage a shut down with superior efficiency and effectiveness
  - an openness to participatory decision-making where judged to be appropriate
  - the ability to appreciate when a situation requires quick and decisive action.

*It is recommended that the leadership make increasing use of this newly acquired orientation to effective management and growth in business by (1) being more proactive in using the new personal and interpersonal skills in addressing business issues; (2) using the established group process skills to greatly improve the problem solving ability of the organisation.*

4. The learning/change model based on: the experience of one’s ‘personal power’; the need to ‘take a stand’; the awareness of the impact that one is having on another; accepting responsibility for one’s actions; seeking emotional support from like-minded individuals and; continuously improving ones inter-personal communication skills, has been highly successful. The evidence for this is:
  - the strongly expressed beliefs of the vast majority of the leadership team
  - the experiences of those who have applied this model in the work place
  - the ready acceptance of this approach to leadership by those reporting to the leader
  - the clear belief that this style of leadership will be good for the organisation, good for business, and good for personal well-being.

*It is recommended that this model of leadership learning /change be supported by senior management so that it will evolve through its infancy and arrive, intact, at an appropriate adult stage. In order to best offer that support, it is recommended that this leadership process be given priority over (1) any competing models especially those that have a learning from an ‘expert’ quality about them; (2) that the integrity of the process be defended from both internal and external forces; (3) that the rationale for the process be continuously reinforced.*

5. The concept of in-house facilitation was a highly effective process for achieving the desired ‘washing through’ of the leadership learning throughout the refinery. Despite the bumpy road of more widely implementing this in-house facilitation, the gains achieved over the duration of the program have been significant.

This conclusion is based on:

- the high skill-based level of those invited to be facilitators
- the enthusiastic response of those who were recipients of the facilitation
- the theoretical consistency between the use of in-house facilitators and the change agent’s model of leadership learning.

*It is recommended that in-house facilitation be recognized as the premier vehicle for achieving the integration of this leadership learning throughout the refinery. In order to achieve this, it is recommended (1) that facilitators be invited to volunteer; (2) that the role be highly regarded as a leadership function; (3) that the task not be additional to everything else that the leader would normally be responsible for; and (4) that the facilitators be the “custodians” of the leadership learning approach so as to better ensure the enduring quality of this important initiative; (5) that facilitators need to come from other than the leadership group, in fact, from all levels within the organisation; and (6) that facilitators need to be constantly monitoring their own learning.*

6. The new insights, attitudes and skills that constituted the learning for the leaders who participated in the Leadership-Program, need to undergo a further process of integration so that they flow directly from the character and personality of each individual rather than representing an unexamined copy of the processes used by the change agent. This conclusion is based on:
  - the evidence that participants, at times, found it difficult to communicate to others what they were experiencing
  - the very positive experiences of those leaders who initiated group dialogue with other staff and who did not attempt to re-use content and processes
  - the awareness that the work needs of different levels within the organisation imply that the technical, social and personal needs will be different.

*It is recommended that (1) special attention be given to the transition from being the recipient of learning to the ‘ownership’ of that same learning; (2) the ownership has a XXX<sup>1</sup> cultural alignment ... that there is a braiding of the existing culture with the new integration; and (3) the process of translation/digestion/integration be both conscious and systematic.*

<sup>1</sup> Name of organisation withheld for confidentiality purposes.