



**Research Thesis**

**The Existence of Leadership  
as Phenomena**

**by**

**Robert Simpson**

**Submitted in fulfillment of requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering**

**University of Technology, Sydney**

**Date: 1 February 2014**

***Certificate of authorship/originality***

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

Production Note:  
Signature removed prior to publication.



.....

## ***Acknowledgements***

I am thankful to many people for their assistance and support during the progress of my research.

Sarahann Simpson has never wavered in her support and understanding over what must have seemed an interminable period. Despite enduring her own challenges over the past 12 months, she refused to let me give up and insisted that I promise to continue to completion. This work is dedicated to her courage and strength. We have been married for more than thirty two years and I love her now more than ever. Also Madeleine, Joseph and Gemma Simpson for the love and support they have given their mother and their indulgence of what must have seemed a crazy and indulgent project on my part.

My supervisor Dr Ken Dovey has provided enthusiastic supervision and encouragement. He has been always open to new ways of looking at the world and has provided inspiration through his experience and knowledge of the material with which I have been grappling for so long. Also, Dr Cathy Killeen, my co-supervisor, who was my first point of contact at UTS for this project and who provided sage guidance in some early decisions.

My thanks to friends, colleagues and contributors— your assistance was essential to my work and is acknowledged and appreciated. In particular I would like to thank Dr Rod Gill and Dr John Wolfenden, my supervisors in the first attempt at this work before I transferred to UTS. I also want to thank my work colleagues who inspired and motivated me throughout this effort, and in particular the people who contributed to the interviews and discussions that are an important part of my story.

*In memory of my father, Robert David Simpson, 1922-2012.*

## ***Table of contents***

<b>Certificate of authorship/originality</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of contents</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
My approach .....	1
The purpose of my method .....	2
Outline of the thesis structure .....	2
<b>Chapter 2 The ‘slipperiness’ of leadership</b> .....	<b>5</b>
What type of word is ‘leadership’? .....	5
A brief history of the word .....	8
An elevator word or a plastic word? .....	11
A new start .....	13
The research question .....	15
<b>Chapter 3 Ideology and method</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Motivation, purpose, perspective and method .....	17
Complex responsive processes .....	21
Autoethnography as a narrative form of research .....	22
Adopting and adapting autoethnography .....	23
Response to critiques of autoethnography .....	24
Risks and benefits of autoethnographic approaches .....	27
Validity of autoethnographic method .....	28
What contribution does an autoethnography make .....	28
Choosing a method: Auto interviewing .....	31
Adding rigour to the auto interview method .....	32
Looking for metaphor .....	36
The method and its implementation .....	42
Ethical considerations .....	43
<b>Chapter 4 Vignettes of experience</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Context .....	45
Critical incident descriptions .....	47
Story 1 - Workshop on Management vs Leadership .....	47
Story 2 - Talking about experience and habits of acting .....	54

Story 3 - Resistance.....	64
Story 4 - A contested decision .....	75
Story 5 - Dealing with a complaint .....	85
<b>Chapter 5 Constructing a 'leadership culture' .....</b>	<b>95</b>
Leader training.....	95
Planning for evaluation .....	98
Evaluating the program.....	99
My experience of talking about leadership.....	101
My experience of leader training .....	110
My experience of practicing as a leader.....	115
A crisis of faith .....	122
<b>Chapter 6 Reflections on researching leadership .....</b>	<b>123</b>
Reflection.....	123
A fourth component of 'leadership' .....	123
Our shared belief in a 'leadership' culture .....	124
Power in a 'leadership culture' .....	126
A perspective on my development and that of others .....	129
Reflexive analysis.....	130
Deconstruction.....	134
The language of 'leadership' .....	134
Metaphors in the accounts about leadership .....	135
'Leadership' analogies and metaphors .....	139
The rhetorical force of the word 'leadership' .....	140
'Leadership' is a trope.....	142
What's missing from my narrative?.....	146
Critical analysis.....	147
Leaderism .....	147
Relationality enacted.....	150
Criticism of our leader training .....	152
<b>Chapter 7 Interpretation of my narratives.....</b>	<b>155</b>
Dealing with phenomena.....	155
Improvisation as an analogy .....	156
The concept of 'leadership' .....	159
The two different perspectives on leadership .....	159
What leader training courses reveal .....	161
The word 'leadership' .....	162
Linking the word and the phenomena.....	162
The word, phenomena and concept.....	164
<b>Chapter 8 Conclusions.....</b>	<b>166</b>
Success or otherwise .....	167

Strengths and weaknesses of the narrative approach.....	168
Contribution .....	169
Recommendations for further work .....	171
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>173</b>
Appendix 1 - History of the organization .....	174
Appendix 2 - Description of the leader development program.....	182
Appendix 3 - Interview transcripts .....	197
Appendix 4 - Ethics approval.....	219
<b>References.....</b>	<b>221</b>

## ***Abstract***

Toward the end of my research I came to doubt the existence of 'leadership'. My doubt emerged as a strange uneasiness and I began to recognise that other writers had described something similar. Rather than proceed on the assumption that 'leadership' existed I decided to address my loss of faith directly and ask 'does leadership exist?'.

In order to address my fundamental uncertainty I needed to change my research approach. In effect I started my research again, adopting as my method a critical and analytical form of autoethnography. Empirical material is now drawn not just from my conversations with others but also my own experience of researching and practicing 'leadership'. As analytical autoethnography is relatively new I adapted guidance provided for group reflective practice (Fook & Gardner 2007; Stacey & Griffin 2005) as the framework for my analytical approach.

Analysis and interpretation is interleaved within the narrative, and set against a theoretical background provided by key references. Research validity is an issue for autoethnography and to maintain research validity I was guided by several papers by Alvesson and his associates ((Alvesson, Hardy & Harley 2008; Alvesson & Kärreman 2007; Alvesson & Sandberg 2011, 2012; Sandberg & Alvesson 2011; Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman 2009).

My narrative tells the story of my involvement in an attempt to build a 'leadership' culture, my evaluation of the outcome of that attempt, and my continuing engagement with theory to interpret what had occurred. Writing this narrative has altered my perspective of what people describe when they talk about 'leadership'. I now see 'leadership' as an active principle of relatedness between leaders and followers and their purposes and resistance. I can now more clearly see the existence of leadership in its three forms: as a word, a concept, and related phenomena.

## ***Chapter 1 Introduction***

There is value in each person's story. The challenge of my thesis is to create a form of writing that accesses my experience and makes that available to others. In doing this I make no claim that my experience is uniquely valuable. My claim is that everyone's experience is both valuable and largely hidden from view. My aim is not just to access my experience but to describe a method that allows others to do the same.

### ***My approach***

My approach is to investigate leadership through a critical narrative presented as an adapted form of autoethnography. My method for accessing experience is adapted from an idea called the auto interview (Boufoy-Bastick 2004). In Boufoy-Bastick's method she uses photographs of places she visited to trigger memories that contributed to her narrative. I used documents and notes I had written, records of interviews with colleagues, comments written in organisation wide surveys, and emails between myself and colleagues to identify critical incidents. I wrote stories based on these critical incidents and these stories were the starting point for reflection on my own experience. I then wrote a longer narrative on my involvement in evaluating our attempt to construct a 'leadership culture'.

The narrative is layered in a number of ways. The short narratives generate multiple strands of reflection that diverge along different themes. The longer narrative allows me to further examine the strands that emerge from the short stories. The layers of the narrative include different forms of analysis and interpretation that are embedded within the story. In this way I move between the story as figure and its context and relevant theory as background. I do this in multiple passes, starting with simple short stories and moving to a description of my broader narrative. To bring this narrative to a conclusion I attempt to bring the divergent reflections together, to identify narrative themes, and to integrate them in an interpretation of what this narrative examination of my experience has revealed to me.

### ***The purpose of my method***

The purpose of this method is deep access to my experience. I see experience as something I have today that has been constructed as a result of events in which I have been involved. My experience at any time acts as a filter through which I interpret events as they unfold. I don't see experience as a 'true' record of events that occurred but I see my experience as the sedimented outcomes of those events. My experience is therefore a set of data that I carry with me each day.

As I learn I can re-interpret that experience. But the data is also written into my body and interpreted through lenses of habit and bias. By writing narratives that seem to make sense, and then analyzing them through multiple lenses, I have been able to engage more deeply with my experience than I could by posing questions to another person. My aim is to develop a way of accessing personal experience that other researchers can use to uncover insights they would not otherwise have had. I also hope that enough leaders with deep experience will publish their reflexive narratives and that taken together we will create a more detailed picture of how 'leadership' is practiced.

### ***Outline of the thesis structure***

In one sense I've already started my story. But before I go further I need to first explain why I have adopted a critical narrative approach. This is the purpose of Chapter 2 which I've called 'the slipperiness of leadership', a phrase coined by Spicer and Alvesson (2011). In Chapter 2 I ask "what type of word is leadership?" and briefly examine the history of the word. I also describe how I came to doubt the existence of 'leadership' and how this framed my research question.

I also need to outline why my approach is methodologically sound, which is the purpose of Chapter 3. I explain the motivation, purpose and method of my work, and then describe the method of autoethnography and how I have adapted autoethnography to the ideology that underpins my approach. I deal with the critiques of autoethnography, its validity as a method and the risks

and benefits of the approach. I explain in some detail the method of the auto interview and how I have used critical reflexive methods to add rigour to its application. I also explain how I have used various tropes to help access my experience and that of others through analysis of language.

Chapter 4 presents five stories constructed from my past experience. These stories are short and present what I believe are typical scenes where 'leadership' might be found. In the terminology I have adopted they are critical incident descriptions and are intended to provide both a trigger to and a context for discussion and analysis.

Chapter 5 is a longer story about my involvement in establishing a 'leadership culture'. It narrates the story of planning for leader training and then evaluating that training. It presents multiple voices and perspectives on the experiences of the participants that I had gathered through conversations and interviews. The chapter presents my experience of talking about 'leadership', my experience of being trained, and my experience of practicing as a leader. This is a long story of intertwined events and I have reduced its length by placing background information in Appendices. These provide further context while not overloading the stories with too much detail. The appendices contain descriptions of the organisational history (Appendix 1), the type of leadership training provided (Appendix 2) and transcripts of interviews I carried out in preparation for evaluation of our leader training (Appendix 3).

Chapter 6 provides an overall analysis of my narrative. It is a critical reflexive analysis that locates my way of thinking about my experience within the context of the events that generated that experience and the context of relevant academic literature.

Chapter 7 attempts to bring these divergent strands of analysis back together. Throughout my work I refer to the word, phenomenon, and concept of 'leadership'. My interpretive method treats each of these individually at first, and then I consider the word and the phenomena together before considering all three in relationship to each other.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter and provides an opportunity for suggestions on how my approach and observations could be further improved. Generally throughout this thesis I place 'leadership' in quotation marks when I want to emphasize that it is a contested concept and indeed in my view its existence is uncertain. I remain uncertain about the existence of 'leadership' as a phenomenon until this concluding chapter. It is only at the end that I can reflect on my overall narrative and come to terms with the uncertainty that has plagued the later stages of my research.

## ***Chapter 2 The 'slipperiness' of leadership***

Having spent many hours reading about 'leadership', talking to people engaged in 'leadership', and writing a thesis about 'leadership' it came as a surprise that in my own writing I found sense of uncertainty and vagueness about 'leadership'. I wrote about the 'ubiquity' of leadership but I hadn't convinced myself that this was significant or relevant. There was a sense that the closer I came to describing the phenomenon of leadership the less I could identify it.

I went back to the literature to see if I could find accounts of a similar experience. It didn't take long. Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson (Alvesson & Sveningsson 2003a, 2003b) had described it directly. Keith Grint also reported something similar when he observed that in his research on leadership "the more I read, the less I understood" (Grint 2000, p. 12). More recently Andre Spicer and Alvesson have described this as the 'slipperiness' of leadership. Their explanation seems to be close to what I had identified as the ubiquity of leadership: "Because leadership seems to become understood as nearly anything, it becomes increasingly tempting to think that it actually means nothing" (Spicer & Alvesson 2011, pp. 194-5).

In re-reading my first attempt and the comments of the examiners I came to two key decisions. The first, which I have already mentioned, was to re-write the account of my experience in a critical narrative form. The second was to make sense of the 'slipperiness' of leadership.

### ***What type of word is 'leadership'?***

What type of word describes something that is ubiquitous and yet prompts respected writers to describe it as slippery? The word 'leadership' is surely not a problem; in fact it is widely and increasingly used. In a cynical way it could be described as a highly effective word: it sells books, attracts people to seminars, it establishes peoples' credentials, and so on. As a word, it is performative. The frequency with which it is used suggests that it describes something that is central to our shared lives. How can it be a mirage; how can there be doubt that the thing to which the word refers exists?

One possible answer is that it is a concept we have socially constructed. In a recent survey of literature about the social construction of 'leadership', Gail Fairhurst and Richard Grant suggested that a common starting point for constructionist approaches is striking down the inevitability of leadership (Fairhurst & Grant 2010). The idea that socially constructed concepts are not inevitable comes from Ian Hacking. While social construction might be an answer to the question of whether leadership exists, it also begs Hacking's question: 'the social construction of what?' (Hacking 1999). Hacking's analysis is directly relevant to my research because he addresses social construction as a modern interpretation of the older idea of 'nominalism' or the idea that an abstract term exists but the abstraction to which it refers doesn't. His first move in answering his own question is to "distinguish between objects, ideas" (Hacking 1999, p. 68) and "a group of words that arise by ... semantic ascent: truth, facts, reality" (Hacking 1999, p. 21). Hacking refers to this group of words as 'elevator words' because they tend to elevate the level of discussion away from simple material aspects.

When we delve further into Hacking's observation an interesting thing happens. He differentiates between objects and ideas. As examples Hacking says that objects include 'people', 'states', 'conditions', 'practices', 'actions', behaviour, 'relations', and 'material objects'; and ideas include 'concepts', 'beliefs', 'attitudes' and 'theories'. Several categories overlap in the difference between 'objects' and 'ideas' such as 'groupings', 'classifications', 'classes', 'sets' and 'groups'. The interest here is in how 'leadership' transcends the categories of objects and ideas and indeed the categories that overlap them. It is not unreasonable to suggest that 'leadership' could be a group of people, a condition for change to occur, a set of practices, a group of actions that influence others, behaviours, relations, and an embodied connection between people. It could also be described as a concept, a belief, an attitude and a theory. This prompts the question: 'Is leadership an elevator word'?

It might seem incongruous to put 'leadership' in the same group of words as 'truth', 'facts' and 'reality', but it is Hacking's description of the characteristics

of elevator words which resonates. These words are “used to say something about the world, or about what we say or think about the world”, they “tend to be circularly defined” and have undergone “substantial mutations of sense and value” (Hacking 1999 p. 23). Later I’ll describe the evolution of the word ‘leadership’, but at this stage and with Hacking’s observations the question of the existence of ‘leadership’ takes a new turn by suggesting that the word might be doing more than pointing to a simple phenomenon that can be experienced.

We now have a range of considerations from the non-existence of ‘leadership’ to a word that can be used to elevate discussion away from the material world. Hacking clarifies this range of possibilities in his summary of the essential characteristics of socially constructed things. First, as we’ve already seen these things need not have existed or be as they are (Hacking 1999, p. 6). In addition, but not essentially, some writers may portray the socially constructed thing as bad, or at least that it should be done away with or if not it could be radically reformed.

Hacking also states a precondition: in the “present state of affairs” a constructed thing is “taken for granted” and “appears to be inevitable” (Hacking 1999, p. 12). There are a number of paradoxes associated with ‘leadership’ and this is one. If it is socially constructed, it appears to be inevitable but in fact it is not. The paradox that points to ‘leadership’ as a socially constructed concept consists of two contradictory observations:

1. There is a widespread assumption that ‘leadership’ is inevitable, and that the relationship between the idea of ‘leadership’ and any phenomenon associated with it is taken for granted; and
2. A social constructionist perspective requires that we reject the inevitability of ‘leadership’.

Beyond the question of the existence of ‘leadership’ are Hacking’s additional questions about whether ‘leadership’ is bad, and whether it should be done away with or at least radically reformed. These questions suggest the necessity of a critical analysis of ‘leadership’ and in particular the impact it

has on peoples' lives, which itself introduces another potential paradox: if 'leadership' is a socially constructed concept how does it materially impact peoples' lives?

### ***A brief history of the word***

In discussing the English word 'leadership' I don't want to ignore the fact that there a lot of people who might be talking about 'leadership' but not speaking English. Social construction suggests that a concept is constructed and that the concept should exist irrespective of the word. The word is a tag applied to the concept. As a quick examination of this I referred to the online dictionary 'Wiktionary' (Wiktionary 2012) which provides an interesting (although not academic) insight into how languages other than English have evolved words for the concept of leadership.

First it is necessary to differentiate the various uses of the word 'leadership', which includes concepts such as the 'state of being a leader' and the 'capacity of someone to lead'. These are differentiated from other usages such as 'position of a leader' or 'a group of leaders'. The two concepts of 'state of being' and the 'capacity to lead' are derived from the suffix 'ship', which derives from Old English, and before that Old Norse, and shares a common root with similar suffixes in Swedish and German.

Although the academic literature I've referenced below only goes back to the eighth century AD, the shared derivation of similar words in Dutch, German, Swedish, and Danish suggests a longer history. The etymology traces it back to the causative of the proto Germanic verb 'to go', which points to an old and basic understanding of what 'leading' denotes. The German word 'Führer' is also derived from another older Germanic word meaning 'to go' and the Latin word 'ducere' also includes the sense of 'to go'. A word derived from 'ducere' is 'seduction' which in 15<sup>th</sup> century English originally meant to induce someone to change their allegiance (Sinclair 2009, p. 268); its apparent evolution away from the modern sense of leadership belies underlying commonalities (Calás & Smircich 1991).

In a rough first pass etymological analysis, this suggests that the English word 'lead' and some equivalents in other languages share a very old sense of 'cause to go'. In a basic metaphorical sense causation of movement remains central to the idea of leadership. Attaching the old suffix of '-ship' to the word 'leader' creates the two simple abstractions: (1) the 'state of being' of 'causing someone to go' or (2) the 'capacity of someone' to 'cause someone to go'.

I present these interpretations of the sense of the word 'leadership' to provide an anchor in material experience that I believe is built into our current usage and which links metaphorically back to our experience of the phenomena associated with that usage. Before we conclude that we have socially constructed 'leadership' as an empty concept we need to deal with the metaphorical association of the word to some experienced phenomenon and its current usage in that sense.

A broader linguistic analysis of the word 'leadership' is called for but it is not the main focus of my work. Suffice it to say that the ancient nature of leadership lies back beyond the modern English derivation and emerges in words in languages such as Swedish ('ledarskap'), German ('Leitung'), Portuguese (liderança), Turkish (liderlik), Catalan (lideratge), and Spanish (liderazgo).

The other way to look at the usage of 'leadership' is through its cultural development. As far as I've been able to discover no one has undertaken this work to the same extent for example that Michel Foucault has in describing the cultural genesis of concepts such as madness, health and sexuality as genealogies or archaeologies (Foucault 1980, 1988, 1992, 1995). What does seem apparent to me is that 'leadership' is a word that has a cultural genesis in the sense of Hacking's other 'elevator words': it has undergone a substantial mutation of sense and value in recent years, from a simple meaning to a concept that is socially constructed and increasingly vague.

The derivation of the word 'leadership' has been described in the academic literature. Rost (1993) comments that 'leadership' is a word that seems to have emerged early in the nineteenth century but 'to lead' in English was derived from the Old English 'leden' which "meant 'to make go', 'to guide', or 'to show the way'" (Rost 1993). Grace (2003) noted that the Oxford English Dictionary's first entry for the word 'lead' is from 825 AD with a meaning defined as: "to cause to go along with oneself, to bring or take (a person or an animal) to a place". By 1225 AD it had made the shift to a more conceptual usage as "to guide with reference to action and opinion; to bring by persuasion or counsel to or into a condition; to conduct by argument or representation to a conclusion; to induce to do something – said of persons, circumstances, evidence, etc." (Grace 2003). The important shift in this definition is from the physical 'place' to the conceptual 'condition' as the end point of the purpose of 'leadership'.

Rost's analysis of old dictionaries indicated that by the eighteenth century the verb 'to lead' included the idea of 'the conduct of authority' as well as 'to entice and allure'. 'Leader' was defined as 'one who leads'. By the early nineteenth century Rost found definitions that included the ideas 'follow', 'influence' and 'persuade' and a definition of 'leadership' as the state or condition of a leader. In references from the beginning of the twentieth century, Rost identified the first definition of leadership that included a psychological element in the 'ability to lead'. However, Webster's dictionary did not include a substantial definition of 'leadership' until 1965 (Rost 1993, p. 60), and this definition expanded the usage to include the office or position of a leader, the quality of a leader in their capacity to lead, and a group of people who lead. One of Rost's conclusions from his review of the etymology of 'leadership' is that dictionary definitions are simple and not very helpful in understanding the concept (ibid p.62).

Beyond dictionary definitions, Rost also undertook a detailed study of the scholarly definitions of leadership from the early to late twentieth century. These show a gradual increase in complexity and there is a commensurate increase in the volume of studies throughout the century. The clear

implication is that 'leadership' is a twentieth century construct with a burgeoning academic interest.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the burgeoning academic interest was driven by an economic demand based on some deeply felt need, the same demand that drove the expanding supply of business oriented leadership books. I've already observed earlier that 'leadership' is a useful word for selling books and getting people to seminars. Similarly in its short history in the modern English language, it appears that 'leadership' has become a powerful rhetorical tool. When combined with a multitude of other words it appears to create both powerful promise and dark threat from combinations such as authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and toxic leadership. It has become commonplace in the business world and as part of our vernacular language 'leadership' has become dehumanised; we now have leadership exhibited by groups, communities and even corporations.

### ***An elevator word or a plastic word?***

I have some difficulty in grouping 'leadership' with Hacking's other elevator words such as 'fact', 'reality' and 'truth'. It fits Hacking's description of an elevator word as having undergone substantial mutation in sense and value. Hacking's idea that elevator words raise the level of discourse also seems relevant. Maybe I can resolve this difficulty by suggesting that there are a group of words that are on their way to being elevator words but are not quite there. In the same way that elevator words 'raise the level of discourse' these other words have a rhetorical impact that transcends their descriptive precision.

Uwe Poerksen identified a group of German words that he described as 'plastic words' (Poerksen 1995). Originally he wanted to call them 'lego words' because of their ability to build meaning interchangeably. Poerksen describes some of the characteristics of these words; they include that the speaker lacks the power to define the word, the word has a broad domain that allows it to replace a more precise term, it condenses a wide field of experience into a single term, it has more of a function than content, the

resonance of the word is imperative, it increases prestige, and it makes other words seem out of date.

Many of these characteristics seem to apply to 'leadership'. I know from the experience of talking to people about 'leadership' that many people struggle to explain what they mean by it despite using the word liberally. 'Leadership' is now used to replace more direct descriptions of experienced phenomena such as influence. I've already commented that its rhetorical impact seems to outstrip our sense of what we mean by it. It is now often used as an imperative as in 'what we need here is more leadership', and it now seems to have rendered 'management' as out of date.

Poerksen thought there were about thirty or forty of these words, and included the German words for "identity", "resource", "communication", "management", "model", "solution", "strategy", "structure", "development", "problem", "function", "process", and "progress". The importance of these words is that they standardize the vernacular with concepts borrowed from science and commerce. Although 'leadership' was not on Poerksen's list it sits comfortably alongside "development" and "strategy" as a word which has entered the vernacular and has a rhetorical force that transcends its direct sense making capability. Another argument that supports declaring 'leadership' a plastic word is its use as an extension and replacement for the word 'management'.

It seems to me that Spicer and Alvesson are describing this same rhetorical quality of leadership when they write about the 'slipperiness' of leadership and theorize that it is "precisely because leadership is so difficult to pin down that people have become so enamoured with it" and that it is its slipperiness that makes it into a kind of sublime idea without form or shape that can almost become anything to anyone". Spicer and Alvesson consider 'leadership' to be similar to words that sit with Hacking's elevator words or Poerksen's plastic words: "knowledge, strategy, culture, identity, and entrepreneurship come to mind" (Spicer and Alvesson 2011, p. 195).

Based as it is on a list of German words, the interesting thing about Pörksen's argument is how well it translates into English. Whether we accept 'leadership' as an elevator word or a plastic word, my observation (backed up by Spicer and Alvesson) is that one interesting aspect of the word is its rhetorical force. Spicer and Alvesson suggest that it is a metaphor that has gone out of control and that we need to stop "investing all our hopes and dreams in it" and start seeing it as "plagued by inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes" (Spicer and Alvesson 2011, p. 205). The idea that 'leadership' is a metaphor is an important idea that I will examine in some detail at various points of my narrative.

### ***A new start***

It was the realisation that maybe I had been unpacking an empty concept that made me reconsider my research approach. I re-read other papers by Mats Alvesson and his associates ((Alvesson, Hardy & Harley 2008; Alvesson & Kärreman 2007; Alvesson & Sandberg 2011, 2012; Sandberg & Alvesson 2011; Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman 2009). I was looking for further discussion of the disappearing nature of leadership. While I found evidence to support the slipperiness of 'leadership' I also found some resonant methodological observations that provided a new starting point and direction for my research. I have summarized these as five observations.

The first observation was about 'problematization' as a way to develop my research question. Alvesson and Sandberg (2012 p.18) consider that real problematization "involves questioning the assumptions underlying one's own meta-theoretical position". They propose that the 'gap filling' practices that dominate current research will not yield novelty, but problematization will come up with "novel research questions through a dialectical interrogation of one's own familiar position, other stances, and the domain of literature targeted for assumption challenging" (Alvesson and Sandberg 2012, p.18). I resolved to challenge assumptions rather than gap fill. I took this observation as advice to write my narrative in terms of my own direct experience, but to validate that experience by comparing it to others' experience as well as the background of my academic reading.

The idea of problematization also requires a different approach to the review of literature, involving “a more narrow literature coverage and in-depth readings of key texts” (Alvesson and Sandberg 2011, p.256). The second observation is that the literature review should focus on path-finding studies, authoritative summaries, and some more recent, influential, and respected pieces, supplemented by broader readings. After considering this alongside the first observation, I decided not to include a ‘literature’ chapter and not to use a literature review to identify gaps in knowledge that I would try to fill. Instead I decided to embed discussion of other authors’ works within my narrative to compare what I had experienced to what others had observed and theorized. The aim is not to be exhaustive but to provide a richer background against which interpretation is set.

With respect to the generation of empirical material, I realised that I needed to recognize that I am always deeply involved in the construction of my empirical material. Consequently, the third observation is that there is a need for me to ‘reflexively’ engage with the empirical material, which I interpret as thinking through what I am doing to “encourage insights about ... the role that language, power/knowledge connections, social interests and ideologies, rhetorical moves and manoeuvring” play in producing this account of my experience (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley 2008, p. 497). My resolve is to challenge assumptions including my own and this requires me to reflexively examine anything that might be simply taken for granted.

Analysis is not a mechanical process with a certain outcome. My “data, or ... empirical material, are simply not capable of showing the right route to theory” (Alvesson & Sandberg 2012, p. 18). The fourth observation is that it is the relationship between theory and empirical material that provides a “source of inspiration” and “a partner for critical dialogue”(ibid). I recognize this as a personal expression of praxis, where the interaction of my experience needs to be set against the theories derived by other authors in the expectation that the combination may result in new insights.

Finally, it is not possible to delve into the leadership literature without coming across definitions of leadership centered on the idea of influence. In most

cases these leave silent the critical question of influence ‘for what purpose?’. While critical management studies have provided primarily a “negative critique of leadership by pointing out more problematic features of leadership ... they largely avoid considering the emancipatory potential of leadership” (Alvesson & Spicer 2012, p. 369). On the basis of this fifth observation I resolved to adopt a critical approach throughout my narrative, not just in a negative sense but also in expectation of the possibility of a more hopeful explanation of why ‘leadership’ has become such a ubiquitous concept.

Together these five observations and my responses have shaped my account. They provide both the starting point and the general approach to my research question, treatment of relevant literature, generation of empirical material, and analytical method.

### ***The research question***

Returning to the ‘slipperiness of leadership’, Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003a) observed that the many definitions of ‘leadership’ have little in common except influencing; that maybe two thirds of ‘leadership’ texts don’t define the term; and that those that do define the term provide quite general definitions. Substituting ‘strategy’ and ‘culture’ in various definitions of leadership shows how non-specific many definitions are, and “organisational structure, job design, social identity, or something else” fit just as well (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a, p.363).

Taking this further, Alvesson and Sveningsson observe that definitions of ‘leadership’ tend to describe a number of phenomena, and that “in the absence of unambiguous information leadership is thus often called for as an interpretative device” (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a, p.363). In this sense, ‘leadership’ is a word used to explain complex and extended events and if researchers go looking for ‘leadership’ their assumption of its existence will guarantee that they find it.

The position put by Alvesson and Sveningsson provides a provocative starting point for my research question: does leadership exist? If ‘leadership’ is an interpretive device or concept used to describe a complex set of

phenomena the research question then further resolves to two questions: 'what are the phenomena that we interpret as leadership?' and 'what is the relationship between the concept of leadership and these phenomena?'

However, if I'm not careful in constructing my research question I will produce a contribution to leadership research that merely adds another dissertation to the ever growing heap of leadership articles, papers, theses and books. The unique perspective I can offer is my own story about my own experience of leadership. So the correct statements of my research questions are 'what has been my experience of the phenomenon or phenomena we describe as leadership?' and 'how have I conceptualised experience of certain phenomena as 'leadership?'.

This re-statement of my research questions has certain fundamental challenges. Access to my own experience is problematic and requires a research method that provides sufficiently rigorous access. The focus on my experience sidesteps a theoretical discussion of existence and looks to the practical aspect of how we use the word 'leadership', and its relationship to various concepts and phenomena.

Chapter 3 discusses the ideology that provides the context for my inquiry and the method that provides access to my experience to answer to my research questions.

### ***Chapter 3 Ideology and method***

In choosing a research approach aligned with the five observations I derived from the work of Alvesson and his colleagues, I drew from three research perspectives to develop a set of questions to guide my choice.

The first perspective is that of the ideology of complex responsive processes. From this perspective the practitioner and the researcher are one and the same. The research “is closely linked to the iteration and possible transformation of identity ... because identity is the answer to the questions: Who am I? Who are we? What am I doing? What are we doing? What is going on? How do we now go on together?” (Stacey and Griffin 2005, p. 10).

An alternative is the perspective of social construction. Fairhurst and Grant (2010) suggest that researchers should develop their research approach through answers to five questions: (a) “who am I?” (b) “which theory?” (c) “which research strategy?” (d) “which methods of data gathering and analysis?” and (e) “for what purpose?”.

The third perspective comes from autoethnography. Chang (2008, p. 61) suggests a research design based on just three questions: (a) why am I undertaking this work? (b) what do I intend to study, and (c) how will I collect, analyse, interpret and present my research? I’ve combined these approaches in a way that makes sense to me.

#### ***Motivation, purpose, perspective and method***

*For what purpose?* This is Chang’s ‘why’ question. Initially, my motivation was to make sense of the work in which I had been involved. The initial motivation came after I spent a year working in a senior government role at a time of significant change in that government department. I had spent the previous decade working as a consultant and project manager in international development projects, as the CEO of an international development company, and as a Board member of the company’s publicly listed parent company. I was interested to spend some time in a senior government role because much of the international development consulting

work I had been doing was about 'institutional strengthening' and a government role would put me on the inside of an 'institution'. In a practical sense my work had been about the development of government and non-government agency capability to effect and manage beneficial economic and social change. While I had started work as an expert in designing and building small water management schemes, most of my subsequent consulting work involved managing teams of experts, usually people who had experience working in their chosen field in 'developed' countries. I took the opportunity to work in government to develop my own expertise in government work.

Part of my role was to oversee the merger of four separate entities into a single division of the Department. At the same time we were managing a large legislative and policy development program. It was a year of intense learning for me about how government works, and in particular it gave me a close up view of politics and power in government.

I returned to the private sector in a different role but with the same company as before. My new role was about corporate development, which involved strategy, growth and capability development. I also continued with international development consulting for the next five years but primarily in project design and evaluation. During this time I first enrolled in part-time post graduate research study as a means to make sense of my experience.

During the first few years of my research I focused on how social change occurred because this was the area most relevant to my previous work experience. I read widely and delved into the numerous theoretical approaches that addressed the complexity of change in organisations. At the same time I was leading activities aimed at growing the size and capabilities of the organisation in which I worked. Through these parallel activities it occurred to me that abstractions about organisations were interesting but ultimately not that helpful in explaining why change occurs. Rather, organisations need to be seen as groups of people and organisational change is about how people change individually and together.

'Leadership' then became a possible answer to my question about social change. We had been developing leaders with the intention of improving our organisational capability for change so it seemed reasonable to evaluate the effectiveness of this program and at the same time draw some conclusions about organisational and social change. I did this and the results were confusing and unsatisfying.

The answer to the 'why' question is simply to make sense of a long history of experience and learning. While my initial motivation was my own learning, I am now more interested in whether the account of my experience makes sense for others and whether it can help them in understanding the things with which I have grappled.

*Which research strategy?* Fairhurst and Grant note that a research strategy should recognize that research can be either purely theoretical or involve theory applied to a practical end. I interpret this against an observation from Alvesson and Sveningsson that highlights "care about the vocabulary applied and respect for the contextual character of language and meaning" which requires "intimacy in relation to the phenomenon under study and depth of understanding at the expense of abstraction, generalizability, and the artificial separation of theory and data" (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a pp.364). There are three key aspects from this observation that I have adopted in my research strategy. First, I need to take considerable care in describing the context of my experience. Second, my experience needs to be described in terms of my relatedness to the context of the experience. Third, intimacy and depth of understanding take precedence over abstraction and generalization. The research strategy then is about an intimate description of my experience, examined analytically in terms of the interplay between theory and experience, and validated through critical reflexivity.

*Who am I?* This is a question I cannot escape. I have been a central player in the context of my experience, as a 'designer' and 'constructor' of the circumstances I describe. Early in my work I fell into the positivist trap of thinking I could distance myself from the initial evaluative work. As I worked through the theory and evaluation results I realised that this is impossible

and that I need to place myself and my assumptions at the centre of the inquiry. The 'who am I' question points me towards an autoethnographic study of my involvement in what was described as an attempt to create a 'leadership culture' within the organisation within which I held a senior management role. So, who I am is an important part of my narrative and an important aspect of my relationship to the context of my research.

*Which theory?* A critical approach to autoethnography requires a tension between (and possibly a degree of skepticism about) self, context and theory. My research question also requires that I identify my ideological assumptions along with the assumptions of the other actors in my narrative. The context is broad and suggests many sources of theory. Rather than trying to canvas all the theory in a single literature review, I've used theory as a backdrop throughout the narrative. The figure and background analogy is important because it denies that my experience can be 'explained' by theory while at the same time affirming the usefulness of a range of theoretical perspectives in making sense of that experience.

*Which methods of data gathering and analysis?* I've described the type of autoethnography I've used as 'layered'. The idea of 'layers' refers to the multiple perspectives of my personal experience, others' accounts of their personal experience, and the theory proposed by other writers. 'Layers' also refers to the presentation of story and history, analysis of my story through a range of analytical lenses, and interpretation of that analysis against a theoretical backdrop.

I stated earlier that my experience is data I carry in me; it is embodied in me. Analysis of this data has been through stories that contribute to a broader narrative, and through reflections on those stories. Storying is one way to access my experience because it provides my recollection of events and reveals the lenses through which I interpreted the events at the time and the lenses through which I now reinterpret those events. I have used a structured approach to analysis of story that moves through reflection, reflexive analysis, analysis of language, and examination of aspects of power and influence.

### ***Complex responsive processes***

In telling my own story, I must always set it in its context, which is an organisation. In this I am guided by Chris Mowles' observation that to "research an organisation understood as patterning and repatterning of people's communicative interactions requires that the researcher uses methods which pay attention to exactly this local interplay" (Mowles 2011, p. 65) and that by "paying attention to my own part in the interactions in which I am participating, taking my own experience seriously, I am also able to say something about the patterning which I am forming, and which is forming me". (ibid p.86).

'Taking experience seriously' is a term used by Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin to describe their approach to research at the Complexity and Management Centre at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire. Stacey and his colleagues have developed a perspective they call 'complex responsive processes' (Griffin 2004; Griffin & Stacey 2005; Shaw 2004; Stacey & Griffin 2005; Stacey 2001, 2002). Their ideology denies the existence of universals that cause action and interaction. They argue that an organisation is an "evolving pattern of interaction between people that emerges in the local interaction of those people, with its fundamental aspects of communication, power and ideology, and evaluative choices" (Stacey & Griffin 2005, p. 19) .

This complex responsive process perspective suggests that "interaction between living bodies is patterned primarily as narrative themes"(ibid p.23) so that "taking one's experience seriously is the activity of articulating and reflecting upon these themes" (ibid p.23). The research method developed from this perspective is "that of giving an account, telling the story, of what I think and feel that I and others are doing in our interaction with each other in particular contexts over particular periods of time" (ibid p23).

Stacey and Griffin claim the explicitly reflexive nature of complex responsive processes differentiates their research method from literary story. Reflexive in a "social sense ... requires the narrator to explicitly locate his or her way of thinking about the story being told in the traditions of thought of his or her

society" by "differentiating between these traditions in a critically aware manner" (ibid p.23). This is achieved by engaging "intensively with literature relevant to his or her particular narrative accounts" (ibid p.23) making explicit the ideologies and power relations uncovered.

Stacey and Griffin defend the complex responsive process method in terms of ideology, ethics and validity. As a practitioner it has been useful to adopt their use of 'ideology' as a term that includes topics such as ontology and epistemology. Being able to identify the ideological presuppositions of my own reflections as well as the theorizing of others is an important research capability. The approach of complex responsive processes treats knowledge as not given in the "reality of the object to be understood" and not something that is there to be "discovered through the scientific method of testing hypotheses in a value-free manner". However "it does not abandon all claims to any kind of truth or to any kind of useful generalizations about human interactions that are valid for all human beings"(ibid p.20).

### ***Autoethnography as a narrative form of research***

In struggling with how I could implement the research method described by Stacey and Griffin I found that 'autoethnography' was used to describe a wide range of narrative forms and that some of these forms come close to the method described by Stacey and Griffin.

In its earliest usage, an autoethnography was the story that a participant in an ethnomethodological study told about themselves (Chang 2008 p.44). Now, by far the more common interpretation is a narrative authored by the researcher about their personal experience.

Autoethnography has been described as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 1). The process of autoethnography combines autobiographical and ethnographic writing to research the situated self within a cultural context. Autoethnographers value "narrative truth based on what a story of experience does—how it is used, understood, and responded to for

and by us and others as writers, participants, audiences, and humans” (ibid p.32)

Ellis and Bochner are among the most cited authors on the topic of autoethnography but they are also advocates of a particular style of autoethnography that could be said to privilege aesthetic aspects over a more analytic approach. An alternative approach has been described as ‘analytical autoethnography’ (Anderson 2006). More recently the term ‘critical autoethnography’ has also been used (Tillmann 2009).

In analytic autoethnography the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher’s published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena” (Anderson 2006, p. 375). The key difference between the analytic and more aesthetic forms of autoethnography is the author’s intention to draw conclusions about the context from personal experience, or in other words, an “autoethnographic lens should therefore start with the self in order to critique the social” (Taber 2012, p. 81). The intense reflexivity of the method requires that “we write ourselves inside-out by continually reflecting back on our lived experience, putting us inside our bodies while simultaneously negotiating the interrelations between ourselves and others” (Spry 2010, p. 278).

### ***Adopting and adapting autoethnography***

I have adopted the term ‘autoethnography’ as a description of my research approach but I have attempted to apply it within the ideology of complex responsive processes. While autoethnographers have provided differing accounts of the emphasis that should be placed on the autobiographical against the social, the complex responsive processes perspective requires that they be treated as one phenomenon. It is Chang’s description of the autoethnographic method that best resolves this by arguing that “autoethnography should be ethnographical in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation” (Chang 2007, p. 208).

A number of different forms of autoethnography have developed from the original 'native' ethnographies and now include methods such as narrative ethnographies, either personal or co-constructed, reflexive dyadic interviews, layered accounts, interactive interviews, and community autoethnographies (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 15-24).

Personal narratives are stories about authors who view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives of their personal experiences. These are a contested form of research if they do not also include "traditional analysis and/or connections to scholarly literature" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 24). Their purpose is to "understand ... some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context" to "invite readers to enter the author's world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 24). Analysis and interpretation is primarily accomplished by the reader.

Co-constructed narratives are similar to the approach developed by Stacey and colleagues. In this approach "each person first writes her or his experience, and then shares and reacts to the story the other wrote at the same time" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 23). An alternative is to use a "layered account" which sets the author's experience against "data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010, p. 20). A layered account should show how data and analysis "frame existing research as a source of questions and comparisons rather than a measure of truth". Unlike other methods such as grounded theory, "layered accounts use vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection" to involve readers in the "emergent experience" of writing research.

### ***Response to critiques of autoethnography***

Chang (2008) identified five areas of criticism of autoethnography. First, there is a tendency to focus too much on self rather than others; second, narration can be emphasized over analysis; third, reliance on personal memory at the expense of other data; fourth, the difficulty of maintaining research ethics in personal narratives.; and fifth, describing research inaccurately as autoethnographic.

### ***The self as data source***

Wall (2006, p. 155) concludes that using self as a single source of data leads to criticism that it is “self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualized”. This criticism asserts that the “subjective subject lacks genuinely thick description and threatens to substitute a psychotherapeutic for a sociological view of life” (ibid).

Ellis, Adam and Bochner (2010, p.37) add that the method has been criticized for being “insufficiently rigorous, theoretical, and analytical, and too aesthetic, emotional, and therapeutic” and that autoethnographers have been criticized for “doing too little fieldwork, for observing too few cultural members, for not spending enough time with (different) others”. They add accusations of biased data, and lack of “hypothesizing, analyzing, and theorizing” (ibid). “Lack of systematicity and methodological rigour” and non-adherence to “traditional scientific tenets” such as “grounding in a theoretical framework, overtly described methodological and data analysis procedures, an audit trail and replicability” are also seen as negative aspects when evaluating autoethnographic work. (Wall 2006, p. 155).

### ***Narration over analysis***

With respect to the criticism of over emphasis of self and narration over analysis, my role as narrator is primarily aimed at describing my reflexive examination of the relationship between my direct experience, the context as described in the data, and the theoretical frameworks within which sense making takes place. In this mode of writing the self is always present but is always also presented relationally. In my approach to critical autoethnographic writing personal memories are one part of the data. Wherever possible they are checked against documents, but it is also likely that the most important moments of experience are unrecorded except in memory, and part of the critical aspect of my reflexive writing is to identify recollections as memories and to test beliefs and assumptions that derive from them.

### ***Reliance on personal memory***

Reliance on personal memory and the problem of hindsight is an issue for most qualitative methods that rely on personal experience of participants, whether as interviewees, respondents, or researchers. People do not have experiences in anticipation that they will need to be recorded as part of research. If we ignore experience that was not recorded in ways other than memory we are ignoring a vast set of data, even though that data may be distorted and vague. It is the case that multiple accounts of the same event will often differ but the differences provide important evidence of how events are experienced and how experience filters events.

At any time we are only ever telling what we remember and our recollection is filtered through our previous experience, biases and beliefs. Looking for common themes in multiple accounts may only be surfacing shared stories or interpretive lenses, which may be interesting in themselves but don't necessarily provide a 'truer' view of the events described. My notes and recordings have aided in combating the inevitable limitations of hindsight. Trying to record the normally unmemorable details of context is an important part of qualitative research but is only a partial defence against the problems of hindsight. There's also the risk that taking only my perception of what was occurring at the time it was occurring will provide a view distorted by my interpretation at the time, so even a detailed record of my own experience without a corresponding account of the experience of others is in many senses incomplete. If the relationality and sociality of the context of my experience can be investigated, it is through the comparison of my experience against those of others.

### ***Ethics of the method***

Ethics is a particular problem for autobiographical narratives because they explicitly or implicitly reveal others' identities as their role in the narrative unfolds. I have re-written several parts of my account to avoid revealing some others' involvement in the story. As a result I have purposely shied away from re-telling episodes that might reveal others' identities. The result is a narrative that is primarily concerned with my personal responses to

episodes rather than the episodes themselves. Similarly, where I have provided 'data' in the Appendices it is data that has been extracted from original notes and recordings so that identities are protected.

### ***Is this really autoethnography?***

Chang's final concern was the mislabeling of other forms of research as autoethnography. In Chang's view researchers have a responsibility to inform themselves on the range of different ways of applying the approach. I have done this and I've convinced myself that while my research approach is at the analytical end of the narrative to analytic autoethnographic spectrum, it is also an approach that maintains the balance between 'auto-', '-ethno-', and '-graphy'.

### ***Risks and benefits of autoethnographic approaches***

Holt (2003) described the experience of defending an autoethnographic thesis and observed that autoethnography has been criticized for being "too self-indulgent and narcissistic". Doloriert and Sambrook observed that "academic faculty often perceive students who choose autoethnography for their postgraduate research as less credible, less serious, and less academic than those taking the more conventional positivist route" (Doloriert & Sambrook 2011, p. 608).

The reported academic aversion to autoethnography reflects an important risk in adopting it as a research method. The evolution of qualitative research (in a sense a movement of researcher from observer to observed) has happened incrementally and as a result the standards by which it is judged may not have also evolved. On the one hand Hughes, Pennington & Makris (2012, p. 217) argue that the method stands up adequately when compared against published requirements for empirical methods. However, the accounts given by Wall (2006, 2008), Learmonth & Humphreys (2012), Holt (2003), and Doloriert & Sambrook (2011) among others, outline continuing challenges to acceptance of autoethnography as a research method.

### ***Validity of autoethnographic method***

Stacey and Griffin (2005) suggest that the organisational researcher needs to adopt an approach that is exploratory and emergent and is undertaken from a position of detached involvement. Validity of the method flows directly from the ideology supporting the inquiry. Stacey and Griffin argue that “global patterns emerge in local interaction” in the “absence of any plan or blueprint for that global pattern”. It follows that one can only understand the organisation from within the local pattern, and that “insights/findings of the research must arise in the researcher’s *reflection* on the micro detail of his or her own *experience* of interaction with others” (Stacey and Griffin 2005, p. 9). This can be seen to apply to both complex responsive processes and the method of autoethnography.

The reflective narrative of the researcher’s experience includes themes that “emerge for further reflection”, and the “narratives of experience and propositional themes emerging in it constitute the research” (Stacey and Griffin 2005, p. 10). Reflection moves in two directions. One direction is a reflection on the life history of the researcher and “how this has shaped the manner in which he or she reflects upon experience” (Stacey and Griffin 2005, p. 9). The other direction is the location of the researcher’s “ways of making sense of experience in the wider traditions of thought that have evolved in the history of human interaction, critically distinguishing between one tradition of thought and another” (Stacey and Griffin 2005, p. 9).

### ***What contribution does an autoethnography make***

My justification for adopting an autoethnographic method draws from the perspective of complex responsive process which is radically different to the positivist approach of normal scientific method. Autoethnography can only be accomplished from the complex responsive process perspective if it adopts several radical inversions of more ‘normal’ research perspectives.

The first self-evident inversion is that the researcher is also the object of the research. While the autoethnographies of professional researchers provide examples of how narrative can also be research, the method will only yield

broader research benefits when practitioners with extensive experience in the context within which the research is set adopt the method as a way to tell their story. Narrative forms are most beneficial when the person being researched becomes the researcher, not when a researcher becomes the person being researched.

There is also an inversion relevant to our increasingly connected reality. Autoethnography seems to be a method well suited to a socially networked world. A set of autoethnographies that are easily discoverable will constitute a rich and diverse data collection where each autoethnography is a deep analysis of individual experience while the set of autoethnographies will provide opportunity for comparative study. In this sense, research can be both data and interpretation. My interpretation of my experience will be data for others to interpret their experience and the experience of others.

There is also an inversion, or possibly a balance, between narration and reflexivity. While some writers rely on the narrative quality of their reflections, in my view it is the reflexive quality of the narrative that is essential. I interpret 'normal' science as a narrative about a scientific inquiry and the results of that inquiry. A reflexive narrative can also be about an inquiry but in addition to the narrative report it presents an inquiry into the narrative itself. Autoethnography needs to be radically and critically reflexive to overcome the criticisms leveled against it. By critically reflexive I mean that it needs to relentlessly unfold the layering of ideology inherent in prior positions of both the author and the author's context. Rather than a pleasing narrative, critical autoethnography should be disorienting and uncomfortable for the writer if it is truly shaking the foundations of their belief. For the reader, in Alvesson's understated term, it should be 'interesting'.

The problem of how my work contributes to knowledge needs to be solved for me to claim that my inquiry has been successful. Clegg and Hardy suggest that we support our knowledge claims by seeking 'objective' knowledge, which is knowledge better able to account for its own production and the production of the phenomena to which it refers. In their view

“objectivity inheres in the degree of reflexivity that knowledge exhibits in relation to the conditions of its own existence” (Clegg & Hardy 2006, p. 438).

Reflexivity then is the way that I will account for both my own learning and the production of the phenomena to which it refers. This dual accounting for both the production of knowledge and the phenomena to which it refers is also taken up by Cunliffe (2003, 2009a) who differentiates between self- and critical-reflexivity, arguing that self-reflexivity exposes the situated, tentative and provisional nature of our social and organisational realities and knowledge. On the other hand, critical-reflexivity, with its roots in critical theory, involves “destabilizing and deconstructing Truths, ideologies, language, overarching narratives, single meanings, authority, and disciplinary practices” (Cunliffe 2009b, p. 60)

While Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) complete their overview of autoethnography by expressing their frustration at the continuing need to debate the validity of autoethnography as a research method, I have tried to keep in mind Stacey and Griffen’s ideology as a framework within which my own claims for validity make sense. While Denzin (2003, p. 261) observes that “critical imagination is radically democratic, pedagogical, and interventionist”, and Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011 p.40) claim that the goal of autoethnography is to “produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better”, I make my claims for validity by stating that this is not an arbitrary account, my choices in the narrative I have written are emergent from and explanatory of my experience, and that this narrative of my experience should resonate and hopefully make sense to others in similar circumstances. In also locating my account in a wider theoretical perspective about leadership in business organisations, I have presented my efforts to make sense of my experience against this backdrop of theory and this sense making should also resonate or clash with others’ own sense making. The important question for the reader of an autoethnography is not whether their response is consonant or dissonant but why it is so.

### ***Choosing a method: Auto interviewing***

Boufooy-Bastick (2004) describes auto-interviewing as a method for accessing and analysing experience. The method has three steps. First, a rich description of experience is written in a narrative style. Boufooy-Bastick use photographs of places she had visited to elicit memories and emotions. In my case I used a critical review of my context to trigger reflections on my experience.

The second step of the method is to identify critical cultural incidents in the narrative which "seemingly had highlighted or affected my worldview" (Boufooy-Bastick 2004 p. 10), and that are "indicative of my own deeply entrenched values" (ibid p.14). These will give rise to themes that emerge from the narrative and which can be considered as a conceptual response to the narrated experiences.

The third step is a 'deconstruction' of the narrative. Boufooy-Bastick achieved this through a comparison of her emic narrative against a disinterested etic analysis of her affective responses. In my case I used analysis of the rhetorical elements of my own narrative. As Boufooy-Bastick observed, "by using a narrative methodology I would use rhetorical devices to present the self-image I intended to project, be it consciously or unconsciously, to the reader and myself" (ibid p.8). I adapted this approach by using Oswick et al's analytical method to identify and analyze certain language tropes that occurred in my narrative (Oswick, Putnam & Keenoy 2004) and Lackoff and Johnson's theory of embodied metaphors to follow metaphors to their most basic associations (Johnson & Lakoff 1999; Lakoff & Johnson 1980b).

One of the main differences between first person research and second person research is the possibility of multiple and continual reinterpretation of examined experience. The auto interview is an iterative process and Boufooy-Bastick's three steps can be seen as sub processes that occur concurrently. This opens up some temporal possibilities that need to be addressed. One possibility is to produce a narrative and to leave that narrative as it is while analysis is undertaken. A second possibility is to continually revise the

narrative as interesting questions arise through analysis. I have chosen this second possibility.

My narrative therefore has never been in a final form throughout my writing and continues to change as I learn more about myself and as I use that to go back and re-interpret my experience. The questions that arise through analysis are inserted into the narrative as implied subsidiary questions to dig deeper into my interpretation and to attempt to further uncover underlying assumptions. To try to present this iterative process in a final document would be chaotic and confusing, so to that extent the final document is a (somewhat) finessed version of an untidy and emergent writing process.

### ***Adding rigour to the auto interview method***

Boufoy-Bastick's description of auto interviewing provides an outline of how a critical autoethnographic narrative can be constructed. However a more rigorous description of the method is required. At the time of writing this there is only one description of the auto interview technique but it shares a common methodological foundation with the method of critical reflection described by Fook and Gardener (2007). Both methods are built on placing the individual in their social context, linking theory and practice, and linking awareness and action. Fook and Gardener's method is also similar to the method of Stacey and Griffin described earlier. I have used Fook and Gardener's comprehensive description of critical reflection to expand Boufoy-Bastick's description of auto interviewing.

Fook and Gardener propose a two stage process for critical reflection that involves three small group facilitated workshops. The first workshop introduces the theory of reflective practice and the importance of group culture of critical acceptance. The second workshop (stage 1) involves each participant presenting a 'critical incident' which is then discussed by the group using 'critical reflective questions' with a focus on identifying underpinning assumptions. The third workshop (stage 2) involves each participant reminding the group of their critical incident and describing what they learned from the discussion in Stage 1 and how they might want to be different or act differently.

There are two aspects of Fook and Gardener's critical reflection method that provide additional rigour to Boufoy-Bastick's auto interview. Both methods employ a critical incident description as a starting point for reflection. In Fook and Gardener's view, a critical incident describes an event that seems significant or important to the narrator's learning and importantly that the narrator wants to learn from. The account of the critical incident should be written out, but should not be more than a page long and should address why the event seems significant. It should provide a "raw and concrete" (Fook and Gardener 2007, p.77) description of both the context and background to the event and the event itself. The same ethical issues arise for the critical incident description as for autoethnography in general. The confidentiality of other people exposed through the narrative needs to be protected, including the interests of the narrator's own privacy and vulnerability issues (ibid p.78).

Analysis of the critical incident proceeds from description to discussion of why the incident is important and why the narrator wants to learn from it. In both Fook and Gardner's method and that of Stacey and Griffin, the ensuing discussion involves small groups, about 8 people in Fook and Gardener's method. The small group provides a diversity of perspectives on the incident description. The group facilitator guides discussion through a series of considerations such as the parts of the story that are untold, the social context of the story, the language that is used, the assumptions behind ideas expressed, and conflicts in the story and between assumptions of the actors. Fook and Gardener comment that often the missing element of the critical description is the emotional content, and suggest using emotion as a "flag" (ibid p.91) both in identifying why the incident is important and what is missing. I have attempted to replicate the small group environment by using a number of alternative perspectives presented in conversations with others involved in leader training as well as comments provided in broader staff surveys.

The second element of Fook and Gardener's method that I have appropriated for my auto interview method is their structured use of

questions to guide critical reflection. The questioning method proposed by Fook and Gardener has been summarized in Table 1.

Purpose	Stage 1	Stage 2
Reflective practice	<p>What does my account of my critical incident imply about, for example, my basic ideals or values, my beliefs about power, my view of myself and other people, what I believe about professionalism? Are there any gaps or contradictions between what I say I do and what is implied by what I do?</p>	<p>What are behind these contradictions and where do they come from? How do I handle these contradictions? What needs to change about my thinking or practice to handle the contradictions?</p>
Reflexivity	<p>How did I influence the situation through: my presence, my actions, my preconceptions or assumptions, other people's perceptions of me, my physical well-being on the day? How have the tools I used to understand the situation affected what I saw? How might I have acted differently if there was something different about the situation (e.g. the other person was of a different gender, I was older, I was in a different role, I hadn't had the same history or experience)? What does that say about my own biases and preconceptions? How has who I am affected what I noticed or felt was important? What might be the perspective of other players in the situation? Why is mine different?</p>	<p>How might I have acted differently so as to influence the situation the way I wanted to? What beliefs or preconceptions might allow me to be more open to other ways of seeing the situation?</p>
Deconstruction	<p>What words or language have I used? What do these indicate about the way I am constructing the situation? What perspectives are missing from my account? What binaries, or 'either-or, forced choice' categories have I constructed? How have I constructed myself, or my professional role, in relation to</p>	<p>What functions, particularly functions in relation to power, do these constructions perform? How might I want to change these constructions to be more in line with my desired thinking and practice?</p>

	other people?	
Critical analysis	<p>What assumptions are implicit in my account and where do they come from?</p> <p>How do my personal experience and beliefs from my social context interact in this situation?</p> <p>What functions (particularly powerful functions) do my beliefs hold?</p>	<p>What do I want to change about my beliefs or practices so I am less restricted?</p> <p>What might I do as an individual that will contribute to broader-level collective changes (with immediate colleagues or in my workplace)?</p>

**Table 1 Purposeful questions (from Fook and Gardener 2007 p. 75-76)**

In Fook and Gardener’s definition critical reflection is the unsettling of individual assumptions to bring about social changes (ibid p.16). My interpretation of Stacey and Griffin’s ideology of complex responsive processes is that they would not agree with the phrase “bring about” preferring maybe “to be generative of” and this is certainly consistent with Fook and Gardener’s view that they are describing a focused process with uncertain outcomes (ibid p. 68). The similarities to Stacey and Griffin’s approach extend to Fook and Gardener’s description of the organisational context appropriate to their method as characterised by uncertainty, risk and complexity, set against an organisational response characterized by working to rules and procedures, generating paperwork, limiting the scope of work, and focusing on outcomes. For the practitioner this organisational environment creates tension between value-based professional assumptions and economically and technically oriented organisational assumptions.

In summary, my autoethnographic narrative is both analytical and critical. The material for the narrative (or the ‘data’ for the analysis) is generated by my adaptation of Boufoy-Bostick’s autointerview method. I construct critical incident descriptions which are critically analysed based on the guidance provided by Fook and Gardener and the ideology provided by Stacey and Griffin. I use Fook and Gardener’s structured questions as a means of drawing out the untold elements of the critical incident descriptions and to identify assumptions, dominant discourses, and deemphasized descriptions of power.

### ***Looking for metaphor***

An important part of my analytical method is aimed at drawing out the relationships between the way we speak and the phenomena we experience. We have already encountered Alvesson's description of leadership as a metaphor. Bennis's view that leadership is intrinsically relational points to language as an intrinsic component of the practice of leaders:

Leadership is grounded in a relationship. In its simplest form, it is a tripod—a leader or leaders, followers, and the common goal they want to achieve. None of those three elements can survive without the others. (Bennis 2007, p. 3)

The relational aspects extend beyond the simple use of language to communicate the 'common goal', extending to the recognition that "leaders and followers are 'relational beings' who constitute each other as such in an unfolding, dynamic relational context" (Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien 2012, p. 1044).

Leaders use language to establish and maintain the relationality between their followers and their common goal. Language is a key element of leadership, in the way leaders construct their visions for the future and the way they and their followers mutually constitute ways of achieving their shared goals.

Metaphors have been used in describing leaders and talking about leadership. Alvesson & Spicer (2011) provide a comprehensive overview of metaphors of leading, including the metaphors of leaders as 'saints', 'gardeners', 'buddies', 'commanders', 'cyborgs', and 'bullies'. Western (2007) uses the metaphors of 'controller', 'therapist' and 'messiah' to describe three historical discourses about leadership.

While Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) discuss how organisational metaphors are constituted from 'root' metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have proposed that the way we reason about concepts is derived from our sensory motor capabilities. In their argument, concepts are mapped to areas of the brain used for perception and motion. This emerges in language where basic metaphors reflect these neural mappings. Our experiences of a conceptual world are expressed in terms of our embodied experience of the

physical world and the cognitive mechanism for such conceptualizations is conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 45). Lakoff and Johnson's argument has been built on empirical work from childhood development, neural science, and linguistics, and provides an explanation of how language and conceptual understanding and reasoning develop from sensorimotor capabilities. In their view:

Complex metaphors are formed from primary ones through conventional conceptual blending, that is, the fitting together of small metaphorical "pieces" into larger wholes. In the process, long-term connections are learned that coactivate a number of primary metaphorical mappings. Each such coactive structure of primary metaphors constitutes a complex metaphorical mapping (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, p. 49).

In examining language about concepts we should recognize that primary metaphors are part of the cognitive unconscious, that they are acquired automatically and unconsciously as a normal process of learning, and that we are most likely unaware that we have formed such associations. These primary metaphors allow us to utilise our literal associations to build extensive descriptions of conceptual worlds and to articulate imagination and speculation, and ultimately to reason about the world, or to use an apt metaphor "to make sense of it".

Lakoff and Johnson's argument describes how our experience of a physical and biological world is applied to make sense of a socially constructed institutional world. This connection from the physical to the conceptual is illustrated by the etymology of the word "to lead" and its derivation from the causative of the verb 'to go'. This is a simple concept that could be experienced in our far distant past as us (representing the person leading) causing a domesticated animal (representing that which is lead) to walk through a gate (representing a purpose). This simple experience of leading is a long way from the academic and industrial concept of leadership that has become the solution to every social and business problem. Is there more to leadership than the simple metaphor of leading people to where you want them to go? To make sense of this question we need to carefully

differentiate the socially constructed concept of 'leadership' from physical actions that constitute the experienced phenomenon of leading.

One important aspect of Lakoff and Johnson's description of metaphors is the dependence of complex metaphors on constitutive simpler metaphors. For organisations, at some point in this 'structure' of metaphors there is a connection between the socially constructed concept and the material world of experience. When Alvesson (2011, p. 70) describes leaders as saints he analytically connects the metaphor to peak moral performance. A discourse oriented perspective looks for connected and parallel metaphors. For 'leader as saint' there is a parallel metaphor of 'organisation as religion'. In fact, leader as saint doesn't seem to work outside the organisation as religion metaphor because there is no metaphorical framework to explain what peak moral performance might be. Within the 'organisation as religion' metaphor there is a rich metaphorical structure to be discovered: rules as commandments, appraisal as confession, and dismissal as damnation.

As a metaphor 'organisation as religion' deals effectively with one of the major challenges of organisational life, which is alignment to organisational goals. In this metaphor alignment is a matter of 'faith'. With 'faith' we start to get to a metaphor that links the conceptual organisation with the material world. We feel faith. It doesn't need to be intellectually rational because our bodies feel that it is right. Using the metaphor of religion we can sideline critics of organisational initiatives as 'unbelievers' and we can pity them in their inability to find faith. Conversely, critics of such leaders can point to others' 'blind faith'.

At this point I want to add an additional leg to Bennis's tripod. In addition to leader, follower and goal there is also always resistance. Without resistance there is no need for influence, and no need for 'leadership'. The fourth leg is paradoxical. Without it there is no need for 'leadership' but with too much of it there are no followers. This fourth leg makes critical analysis of 'leadership' essential because it involves implicitly the question of the purpose of the purpose. It makes visible the over simplification in Bennis's tripod as an example of the uncritical 'means to an end' thinking where the

end remains unquestioned. It is 'blind faith' that makes the tripod description of leadership satisfying.

I think Alvesson's discussion of the 'leader as saint' metaphor lacks this dimension of 'organisation as religion' and therefore misses the opportunity to identify the role of the saint in encouraging, through their use of metaphor, the development of 'faith' in the organisation and all the corresponding cascading religious metaphors which contribute to a constructed organisational morality. Western (2007) gets closer to the religious theme in his metaphor of 'leader as messiah' and indirectly deals with how leaders use the religious metaphor to engender faith in their followers. He links the messiah metaphor to the objective of transforming the organisation and the role of charisma in transformation. He quotes Nietzsche's character Zarathustra's question 'how is man to be surpassed?' The linking of organisational transformation to religion's transcendence of the material world brings us closer to how the 'organisation as religion' metaphor works in its link to eternal life and our fear of death. The promise of the messiah is always about transcendence of fear and a movement towards security, from persecution to freedom, or more dramatically from mortality to immortality.

There is a performative effect of these religious metaphors when used by leaders. The appeal to faith is accepted because faith is considered good. It is only when we talk of 'blind faith' that we question the purpose of the metaphor. But the appeal of critics to beware of 'blind faith' is countered by our deep fear of death and our desire for salvation. The root metaphor here is lost in time. Did leadership metaphors arise from salvation stories or are salvation stories 'leadership' strategies?

Other metaphors of leadership also link to parallel metaphors of organisation. The 'leader as commander' links to 'organisation as army' and 'competition as war'. The 'leader as gardener' links to 'organisation as garden' and 'work as sustenance and survival'. The 'leader as buddy' links to 'organisation as friendship' and the essential need of sociality. To me the metaphors of leadership are interesting but their usefulness is in how leaders create

shared beliefs using these extended metaphors and how they link these metaphors back to their followers' sense making.

In critically analyzing my narrative, I am looking for places where “metaphorical language emerges in the labeling, explaining, and justifying of one path over another” in those “precise moments of communicating when holding oneself or another accountable for the actions taken” (Fairhurst 2011). In this statement Fairhurst suggests how we make sense of what we are doing when we play the roles we adopt or are expected to adopt in our organisational life.

Using Lakoff and Johnson's description of the multiple layering of metaphor in language we can look into the structure of language that reveals the link between experience and abstraction. While Brown (1976, p. 176) groups a range of tropes under the single heading of metaphors, the various other types of tropes have an important analytical role in organisational studies (Oswick, Putnam & Keenoy 2004). In addition to metaphor, Oswick et al identify synecdoche, metonymy, and irony as four major classes of tropes and categorize their effect as resonant or dissonant. Resonance or dissonance can indicate whether speech acts are sense making or resistant, revealing how people are experiencing their interaction with the abstractions of organisational life. This more granular view of tropes helps to disentangle the complexity of the linguistic structures and helps to identify how language is being used performatively to resist, to make sense of experience, or to construct new abstractions as extensions to our already constructed reality.

Table 2 adopts Oswick et al's summary of types of tropes and suggests how these can be used to examine the relationship between discourse and experience.

<b>Analytical application</b>	<b>Resonance tropes</b>	<b>Dissonance tropes</b>
<b>Dominant form</b>	Metaphor	Irony
<b>Alternative/subsidiary forms</b>	Metonymy, synecdoche, allegory, simile and analogy	Paradox, sarcasm, parody, satire and anomaly
<b>Basis of analysis</b>	Functions through resemblances developed from comparison/contrast, substitution, representation, and reduction	Functions through incongruity developed from ambiguities and contradictions
<b>Surface/figurative applications in organisational discourse</b>	Makes meanings visible by generating Gestalt-like insights and/or providing discursive embellishment	Makes meanings visible by generating contradiction, humour, understatement or caustic commentary
<b>Deeper/cognitive applications in organisational analysis</b>	Crystallizing a particular view and/or disseminating pre-existing knowledge	Undermining prevailing view and/or challenging conventional knowledge
<b>Potential meta-level implications for organisational theorizing</b>	Mechanisms for paradigm reinforcement	Mechanisms for paradigm disruption

Table 2 Adopted from Table 4.1 **Contrasting applications and forms of trope in organisational analysis (Oswick et al 2004 p109)**

Application of these tropes as a method of analysis of organisational discourse operates at a different scale to the discussion of leadership metaphors provided by Alvesson and Spicer and Western. The difference is best described by Hacking's differentiation of 'the social construction of reality' and the 'construction of social reality'. He observes that when John Searle (1995a) writes about institutions he is not writing about social construction (Hacking 1999, p.12) but that institutions are a 'social reality'.

Searle's theory of constructing social reality, based as it is on Austin's view of the performative capability of words (Austin 1962), can be seen as similar to the way metaphors are used to build from material experience to abstract concepts. Metonymy in particular has the ability to translate the material to the abstract, such as 'the church' referring to a building or the institution, or 'a bridge' being a physical entity or a connection between ideas. Our social reality is socially constructed through our shared use of a language that allows us to construct abstractions from our material experience and to talk about our conceptual experiences as if they were real experiences. Lakoff and Johnson's research suggests that there are many layers to our metaphorical construction of social reality.

While leaders can use root metaphors as pre-digested understanding that can be applied by organisational members to make sense of current

experience, they can also use tropes to create new social realities. The method of analysis I've used for my stories and other leader's stories is partly aimed at uncovering the creative use of tropes to create new social realities that contribute to the phenomenon that leadership theorists might describe as 'vision', as well as the use of root metaphors to help followers makes sense of both the 'vision' and their experience in trying to attain it.

### ***The method and its implementation***

My method presents several narratives. These are research narratives because they are structured to present layers that are reflective, reflexive, deconstructive and critical. Each layer exposes new perspectives on my reported experience. As autoethnography, these collected narratives are not considered as 'data' from which themes can be extracted. Rather they are a deep examination of the layers of assumptions that influence the creation of the narrative itself. It is the narrative, its unfolding, and its examination of its own creation that provides insight into how we see, create and respond to our emerging reality.

In Chapter 4 I present five stories written as critical incidents in the raw concrete way described by Fook and Gardener. These adapt Boufoy-Bastick's method by using Fook and Gardener's reflective questions and critical incident descriptions. Because of ethical concerns I wrote these as amalgams of experience, either to hide the identities of the people involved or to conflate several similar episodes into a single description. I use the critical questions in Table 1 to write analytical and reflexive narratives. The narratives were constructed iteratively; the reflection on each story contains insights that triggered other memories which in turn triggered other insights. Where appropriate I also refer to literature that helps makes sense of the reported experiences.

In Chapter 5 I present a longer narrative about my involvement in leader training evaluation. This narrative is based on my experience of working in a leadership team that set out to create a 'leadership culture' as a means to deal with growth and change in our organisation. I applied the same

analytical framework as used in Chapter 4 to create a critical analytic narrative.

In Chapter 6 I present a narrative derived from reflections on my experiences researching leadership. This narrative looks away from my involvement in attempting to create a 'leadership culture' and turns towards my motivations and assumptions in undertaking research on leadership. The chapter draws from the narratives in Chapter 4 and 5 as well as introducing new narrative elements. I again use Fook and Gardener's four analytical categories of reflection, reflexive analysis, deconstruction, and critical analysis as an analytical framework for my narrative. The narrative draws some themes from the literature that resonate with my experience.

In Chapter 7 I interpret my narratives. My interpretive method deals with the three ideas I have been pursuing since the beginning of this work: the word, the phenomena, and the concept. Interpretation needs to bring these ideas together, to show how they are related. The narratives of Chapter 4, 5 and 6 provide insights into the use of the word and the metaphorical structures revealed in its usage. I treat the word, the concept and the phenomena separately at first, and then I consider the word and the phenomena together before considering all three in relationship to each other. In each case I try to foreground my experience against a background of theory with the expectation that the counter-position of the two will show up particular resonance or dissonance.

### ***Ethical considerations***

As a research method, narrative can be factual or fictionalized. Writers may choose to fictionalize accounts for ethical reasons (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2010). To some degree I'm a public figure in that I've held positions that have required a degree of public disclosure. I've worked in a public company and been either a director or senior executive of that company for over 20 years. Matters that some might consider private become public under current corporate governance requirements. Using an internet search tool anyone could uncover the account of the Company's history that I've

included in Appendix 1. From an ethical point of view, I am not anonymous and by extension neither are my colleagues. While I have come to terms with my own position, I recognize that others I have worked with may not be as comfortable with this degree of public exposure. This has important implications for how I tell my story within the constraints of normal research ethics.

Fictionalizing my account would seem ineffective in hiding the identities of the other senior executives with whom I have worked. For this reason I have chosen to use the first person plural pronoun in places to represent group decisions. Needless to say most decisions of a management group are not unanimous. By using the pronoun 'we' I am not disclosing whether any particular person held or didn't hold a particular view.

I have also constructed stories by conflating similar events to produce accounts that maintain details of what happened but which obscure the individual identities of those involved. While these are fictionalized accounts the description of details is based on real events and in some cases I have used actual dialogue from written comments or recorded interviews. In all cases this has been embedded in stories where the context and the details hide the identities of those involved.

## ***Chapter 4 Vignettes of experience***

This chapter includes five critical incident descriptions analyzed using the auto interview method described in Chapter 3. These descriptions are presented as vignettes, each a short narrative of my experience as a member of a leadership team. Consistent with the concept of an auto-interview presented in Chapter 3, these provide a starting point for reflection on and analysis of my experience. Before starting the vignettes I provide some context about the organisation within which my experience was gained. An extended description of the context is included in Appendix 1.

### ***Context***

The context of my experience was a period of rapid growth of the organisation in which I worked as a member of the executive management team. During this period, among many other corporate initiatives, we set out to develop a 'leadership culture' as an antidote to problems emerging from rapid growth. We chose a supplier of leader development training and over a period of five years around 70 people were trained in a series of related leader development and organisational performance courses. The number is inexact because it depends on a number of definitional issues such as whether people completed courses (a few didn't) and whether the same person was involved in a number of courses (a few were).

I've chosen to focus this discussion of context on two specific aspects. The first aspect is the aspirations and outcomes of our strategic plans. The second aspect was our idea of a 'leadership' culture which in one sense was a response to the outcomes of the partial success of our strategic intentions exhibited as rapid organizational growth.

Collectively we had a set of general beliefs about growth for our company. As a group these beliefs derived from our individual ideologies and as such their expression is an amalgam of individual beliefs. What follows is my summary which of course may differ from other individual accounts.

For a public company the answer to 'why grow?' lies in creating shareholder value. Value is created through share price increase and in the flow of dividends to shareholders. Ultimately it is prospective shareholders' expectations that drive increases or decreases in share price. It is the last transaction that sets the price and the next transaction that will set the price movement. If a potential shareholder believes that a company will provide better returns in the future, the valuation they place on the company will reflect their expectations. Belief about the future will depend on past performance and a history of growth will create an expectation of more growth and likely result in a higher share price. Growth is therefore important because it increases the value of shareholders' shares as well as expectations about the future value of those shares.

So in simple terms this is why we set ambitious aspirational goals and objectives in our strategies and why other companies do the same thing. The size of our organisation increased from around 1000 people in 2002 to more than 4000 in 2008 due primarily to significant acquisition activity. The result was an organisation comprising groups of people who had been part of different organisational histories and culture. We believed that the scale of change required corresponding changes to the way the company was organized and managed.

One requirement driven by acquisition was a need to bring managers from diverse organisation cultures and histories into a single management structure. This was seen as an important problem to be solved and we treated it as similar to the more familiar problem of forming project teams. The analogy was that both problems involved bringing together people from diverse backgrounds to form an effective operational team. We had experience of bringing together teams for large projects and had worked effectively with consultants who facilitated this process.

We applied our experience with large project teams to the problem of forming a single organisational culture. When we instituted the first leadership training we had a stated objective of developing our senior managers' ability to transform the Company. Based on our experience with large projects, we

expected 'leadership' training to provide a new common language for management and that common language would contribute to an organisational culture that would deliver benefits for all stakeholders.

### ***Critical incident descriptions***

The remainder of this chapter contains narratives that describe events that occurred during the period of my research. The narratives are short and their purpose is to trigger the reflection and analysis that follows. In one sense they are vignettes that represent everyday circumstances in which individuals could lead other individuals or groups.

The narratives have been constructed around events that have some significance to me. Some of these are compounded from a range of similar events. In one sense they are memories but in a more profound sense they are my re-telling of remembered events as the person that I am now. In my analysis I have tried to unravel these two perspectives but in many cases what remains of the memory is somewhat skeletal. What is important in this narrative approach is not the accuracy of the details but the sense that the narrative discloses.

#### ***Story 1 - Workshop on Management vs Leadership***

*The room was a typical hotel meeting room, smaller than the ballroom where we held the main sessions but still big enough for around 50 people. There were only about 20 people in the room. There were other parallel sessions in other rooms that were clearly more interesting than this topic. A facilitator started the session with some thoughts on why leadership and management might be different but stressed that this was meant to be a workshop and invited people to put forward their view.*

*John spoke first. John thought that leadership was part of management. Management was about organizing resources, mainly people, to achieve the company's objectives. As a manager you had authority to tell people what to do and this was what leading was - using your authority to provide direction so people knew what to do.*

*A clamour of voices drowned out the end of John's view. Michael stood up to make himself heard. In his view that was nonsense. He thought that the people he worked with were not going to be told what to do. They were all smart people who deserved to be involved in decisions and if they weren't they would just ignore decisions they didn't agree with and do what they thought was the right thing. It was more likely that management in our company was a skill set that leaders used as part of the job as leaders. In*

*Michael's view leaders need to involve people in decisions, and to make sure that people are aligned with decisions and by each person aligning with decisions there was less need for managers to be giving directions all day.*

*The discussion seemed to be going down the path of a debate about whether leadership was part of management or management part of leadership. Then James spoke. Leadership for James could happen anywhere and didn't need to be related to management at all. A person who 'models' the right behaviours is acting as a leader even if they are not a manager.*

*I felt frustrated at this point. No one seemed to have any idea of what the difference between leadership and management was. The whole session seemed to be a waste of time. We had not solved anything.*

### Reflection

My frustration at the lack of agreement on the difference between management and leadership was a result of wanting an answer. We had invested heavily in leadership training and it was unclear whether it was the right choice. Maybe management training would provide a better outcome. I wanted a result because I had advocated for this investment. Hearing the range of views, all argued sincerely by people who were senior managers, was confronting. The problem was that I felt that many of the views were valid even though they seemed contradictory. I think this was when I started to doubt the certainty of my commitment to leadership training.

My story reveals some things about me. I had a strong response to the lack of effective definitions of management and leadership. I seemed to have a strong belief that there was a difference and this was something I hadn't recognized before. In retrospect my own contributions to discussion were no more definitive than those of others, and yet at the time I felt so certain that I knew the difference.

If I had to answer the same question now I would focus on the difference between the authority of managers and influence of leaders. Both are a form of power, with authority being structural and influence deriving from personal behaviour and practices. To this extent they are not mutually exclusive; managers can be leaders and leaders may be managers. But the question

remains whether 'leadership' is anything more than what leaders do. If what leaders do is influence, are 'leadership' and influence the same thing?

For a long time I was researching 'leadership' based on a belief in its existence, maybe even a hope that it was a panacea for organisational dysfunction. I now find myself less certain and yet I still frequently use 'leadership' when I talk about what we are doing as an organisation. It seems that I am now having to learn a new way of talking about 'leadership', or maybe not to talk about it at all. It seems that leadership is a construction of both society and myself, but either my construction or my certainty has started to crumble. It is no longer the answer to every organisational problem.

Instead of relying on the word 'leadership' I am looking for a more fundamental assessment of what people are doing when they are leading. I am listening and watching more when people talk in meetings, not just at them but at the reactions of those around me. I am trying to stop using 'leadership' as an abbreviation for a collection of actions and behaviours that occurs in unique circumstances in space and time, and instead looking for descriptions of what the individual actions and behaviours might be.

### Reflexive analysis

My role in this narrative has two dimensions. First, as a participant I made a minor contribution of a few opinions that I now see as based on assumptions different to my current world view. Second, I am reflected in the narrative in how I chose to narrate it and what I chose to disclose. I claim that my assumptions are different now but a reflexive analysis needs to test whether that is a credible statement.

As a simple model of how I've constructed this narrative I could say that my narration draws from memory and my memory is a trace of my filtered experience. But how I draw from memory is also filtered by my more recent experience. What I heard people say was both a product of the words they said and what I expected them to say. What I draw from my memory is both a part of what I recall and what I would like to say about the event. Despite

this, the strongest memory and the one I trust the most was the feeling of frustration that the discussion was going nowhere, that there was no movement towards resolution.

Since the time of this experience I have read through many personal accounts of organisational life as experienced by the people who worked around me. For some of these accounts I can say I felt a connection with the view being expressed. In a similar way I sense a difference in the person relating the story and the person in the story, although I am that same person. I don't relate as strongly to the person in the story that is me because if I was in the same situation now I would say different things to the things I said then. Or would I?

I could have acted differently if my experience was different but I could also have acted differently if the other people involved were different people or their experience was different. If we all had similar opinions the discussion would have been quite different. If we all had the same view it would have been a discussion based on self-serving agreement. In the face of someone offering their opinion aggressively, I may not have offered an honest account, and without a converse view there may not have been an opportunity to frame a contest of ideas. The discussion was not just a construction of my doing but a construction of all those who contributed. It is easy to interpret this story from my point of view and more difficult to interpret it as an intersection of multiple points of view. Understanding the discussion in this way opens a different way of interpreting what was going on. Our common sense view of the interaction is that opinions were set against each other and the 'right' opinion would prevail and would therefore be the truth. An alternative view is that multiple opinions collide and each was dented to a greater or lesser extent and that the diverse beliefs of the participants became less diverse.

### Deconstruction

This is my story so the words are those I choose at the time of writing to tell the story. I have no reliable source to refer to that provides the words that I

or any of the participants used during that event. The words then are telling me about how I have chosen to construct this story.

Missing from my account is the richness of the sensory experience of the event. What was the room like? How did I feel on the day? How were others being, were they bored or were they passionately involved in the discussion? All of these aspects are missing because the story is about how I felt or more correctly my memory of how I felt.

I described the room as a "typical hotel meeting" room. When I read this back there's a feeling of despondency, a sense of many hours spent talking about the problems of managing organisations in places we describe as 'off site'. There are a whole set of assumptions about getting out of the work place to allow discussion to be more open and maybe more honest. There's also the sense of frustration at the need to spend so much time in windowless rooms in ardent discussion of business goals and objectives, or strategies and plans.

I've remarked that there were only 20 people in the room and that other people chose the parallel streams. I now see that as a feeling that others didn't accord this topic the same importance that I did. I now wonder whether this was about the importance of the topic or my concern that my choice was less popular than other choices. Maybe I was worried that I was missing something more important. Or maybe I felt that others were invalidating my preference by choosing something different.

I've written that a "clamour" of voices responded to John's view. I sense here that I have a preference for an orderly discussion and that the untidiness of the clamour of voices all trying to put forward their opinion was discordant with my aspiration that there would be a methodical structured account of the argument and an orderly progression toward the 'truth'. I wonder how many other people felt that way and how much of the clamour was an expression of people's desire to cut through the argument and get to the 'truth'.

My choice of this narrative is founded on a binary distinction between 'management' and 'leadership' which is and has been widely contested. The narrative lays out three of the views that people put forward. Underpinning this distinction is a range of views of how change happens in an organisation. Behind the idea of change in organisations are concerns about who benefits from change and who loses. It's not surprising that I was 'frustrated' and that there was a 'clamour' of voices. A discussion about change is often a discussion about winners and losers and how we arrange or allow that to happen. There is an emotional connection to change, either in how we do or don't want it, how we cause it to happen, or whether it is something that happens to us. This is always a discussion about relativities of power and control.

I could write this narrative again from a very different perspective. I could imagine the emotions of the speakers as they spoke, and their thoughts and recollections of how their experiences formed their opinions. How John as a manager with structural authority was frustrated at the resistance of his staff to the instructions he had given. I could imagine Michael's anxiety at having to give instructions and his reliance on less direct ways of letting people know what he wanted them to do and the confusion and frustration of his staff at never really knowing what Michael wanted them to do. I could imagine James as a person with no structural authority who believed he was 'modeling' the way people should be. Possibly he worked for John and was angry that John just wanted to give instructions and never listened to other views. James might strongly believe in his right to passively resist John's instructions because they weren't the way he would do things. Or he might be idealistic, or he may have read that view in a book just the week before. The story could be told many different ways, all of which make sense, all of which have probably been told before.

### Critical analysis

I felt at the time that the discussion was a waste of time. I no longer believe that but I hear or read this view regularly in comments from respondents in

staff surveys. I even see it in advertisements that tell me to "stop talking and start acting".

In telling this story I am telling about my own development and how I now see my participation in discussions. Having sat through many such discussions I realise that the sense making that takes place for individuals is visceral. The views expressed are in some senses peripheral to the way people feel about the discussion. My recollection of the discussion was driven by my memory of frustration. That frustration was a product of who I was or maybe, more accurately, who I was being. My belief in a right answer to the question and my confidence in my own view are the elements I take from this story. The three viewpoints I chose to relate may or may not have been offered at the time. They are my constructions of possible views.

The circumstances are accurate and the views are credible. This type of discussion takes place at multiple times and locations within organisations. It is what we do with our time when we are making sense of who we are and what we are meant to be doing.

One assumption in my telling of this story is that my frustration was misplaced, and that the discussion was worthwhile. I think this comes from a view that sharing of opinions is a basic function in constructing a shared identity that we call an 'organisation'. One way of describing an organisation is as a collection of people. People choose to associate themselves with an organisation. The choice is reinforced or eroded by their experience of organisational life, and discussions such as the one described in my narrative are part of the way the choice to be part of the collective are reinforced or eroded. Although I remember my frustration at this particular discussion the overall effect of the off-site conference was to allow plenty of time to share experiences with the people around me, and this reinforced my choice of being part of the collective.

## ***Story 2 - Talking about experience and habits of acting***

*We're sitting together talking about the experience of the leadership training. I had heard that some people had found it confronting, that the facilitators went looking for an event in people's lives that could be used to explain why they behaved the way they did. Sometime the interactions had become emotional and several people had reported being uncomfortable about the openness that was demanded of them. I asked people about their experience.*

*Jane said "it was confronting as I had to answer questions when I was put on the spot. And you know I'm not an 'out there' type of person. They wanted me to go down into myself and find internal traits I didn't want to share. I had to admit my failings in front of people I didn't know well". She paused and then added "it was very cathartic".*

*Robert chipped in: "I think it was beneficial to understand more about yourself and what you believe as a leader, and how you could behave better. I think it helped my ability to look at myself, but it was a very emotional experience".*

*I asked whether their views were different to the other people in their course. Charles said "there were some people who felt they hadn't gained much in terms of self-awareness but I think that was a problem with their attitude. You have to be up for the challenge".*

*I offered my own perspective: "When I did the exercise where we were asked to think of an event in my life that seemed important I went back to something that occurred when I was maybe 11 or 12 years old. The group discussion that followed helped me make sense of why it seemed important. It was emotional. But I think talking with others, hearing their suggestions, and making sense of it together was the value of the exercise."*

*John agreed: "Talking through the way I behaved I realised that I was arrogant, impatient and selfish. I'm more conscious and aware of this now; I know what the guilt is about".*

### Reflection

This is my story in my words constructed from interview notes. As such it is fictional and already interpreted. In this case my reflection starts with why I find these views interesting, why they resonate or are dissonant, and why they make sense as realistic perspectives. The leader training we arranged for our people was not aimed at improving their knowledge of 'leadership', although there was an explicit knowledge component to the course. The fictional discussion above was about that part of the training that guided the participants towards a view of how they responded to 'leadership' situations and how that was influenced by habits of thinking and acting.

The aspects of this story that interest me are the differing accounts that people offer of their experience. Jane, for example, describes the experience as difficult but finishes by saying it was cathartic. There is a deep metaphor in this that I will come back to. Compared to Jane's embodied description of 'going down' into herself, Robert refers to the experience in cognitive terms, he 'understands' himself and there are things that he 'believes' about himself, but despite that he acknowledges that his was an emotional experience. It is notable that he conceptualizes his view by saying it is beneficial to understand 'yourself', referring to himself in the second person, possibly as a means of distancing himself from the emotions that he may have unexpectedly experienced.

Charles indicates that there is a challenge in examining one's own experiences and that it requires some commitment, maybe even courage, to do it. John's comment is a little cryptic by ending the way it does, referring to 'guilt'; there is clearly a story behind this. In these stories and other participants' stories it is possible to see that although experiences are similar they are also unique.

I realised as I framed this story that the experiential training that we discussed mirrors the method I have described for my thesis. The training technique of recalling an event from the past that seemed important is similar to writing a critical incident description. The group discussion mirrored the reflective method described in the previous chapter for uncovering assumptions and gaps in the narrative.

My own experience that I related in the story was an event from a long time ago, but one that recurs in my thoughts. The sense I made of the event was about power and contests and how I now feel about those things and how I see myself. I recall now some of the details of the discussion. The facilitator was dominant in these discussions and in retrospect there was a psychological orientation to the interpretations offered. I felt uneasy about how facile these interpretations were. As I work through my reflections and reflexive analysis I can see the attraction of the simple causal explanations offered by the facilitators.

### Reflexive analysis

Griffin (2005) describes two different ways we can look at organisations. The first is the dominant modern way, which he calls systemic self-organisation. This has emerged from an analogy between organisations and living entities, which is also evident in the words 'organism' and 'organisation'. An individual manager or leader with this perspective could be compared to a scientist objectively observing and working on an entity that is unfolding according to some sort of pre-determined pattern. This dominant view is reflected in ideas about the reified organisation such as learning organisations, organisational evolution, the location of leadership in individuals, and the absorption of complexity as a component of a type of system.

The alternative according to Griffin is a "participative self-organisation" in which participation refers to the "direct interaction between human bodies" rather than simply being participation in a larger whole. Humans know about themselves and their surroundings through this "social process of interacting with each other ... they become themselves in the process" (Griffin 2005, p. 39).

In Griffin's view, each individual's 'self' is partially an outcome of the complex responsive processes of relating in their organisational life. Griffin suggests that the evidence for this lies in the treatment of paradox. Culture is a paradox because we create it and are created by it. Seeing ourselves as autonomous individuals seems to be the starting point for many organisational paradoxes. Our self-awareness is a story we tell ourselves, an image we create. A true scientific image of ourselves would not privilege us as individuals, we would see ourselves in the way we see one tree in a forest: different but the same, an essential part of our group in terms of its groupness, but also dispensable as a member of the group because our contribution to the group's groupness is not unique.

Many of our leadership trainees believed that learning about themselves was an important part of the path to becoming a leader. But there is also a sense of ourselves as self-aware embodied individuals. We talk about our history

as memory but memory is also embodied as sedimented experience. As I learn about myself I become aware of the many sedimented layers of experiences that I carry with me and how I have learned to be a different person in different contexts.

What anxieties are generated while the organisation and the individual are re-moulding each other? In John's case his behaviour created the experience he was having in the organisation. Jane's experience of facing her past was 'confronting' and in the end 'cathartic'. Why 'cathartic'? Is it because we have been moulded into something we would choose not to be, and in seeing our habitualised way of being we are free to choose something different? When we start to answer questions like these we start to 'see' the organisation as an embodied reality, as a grouping of bodies of sedimented experience relating with each other in a chaotic reality which is more or less mediated by agreed rules, policies and norms.

We influence situations by our presence and actions but also by our preconceptions and assumptions. We bodily respond to others and they respond to us, in a continually changing dynamic. We are more or less comfortable about the rules and expectations set within organisations and society that moderate our behaviour, from social behavioural rules that make it unacceptable to use violence against someone in a meeting when we disagree with what they say, to organisational cultural rules that make it unacceptable to speak loudly when we don't agree with what someone says. But it seems we have adopted our own set of 'rules' about how we behave based on how our interactions with others have played out in the past. Awareness of these self-imposed rules is what people seem to call self-awareness.

These 'rules' are our preconceptions and biases. The reflexive method I have adopted is directed at discovering my own bias and perceptions that blind me to certain interpretations of my experience. New interpretations of experience can lead to new 'rules' about how I allow myself to act, which could lead to innovations in the way I respond to others.

I need to keep reminding myself that this is my story and so is constructed on a foundation of my biases and preconceptions. The difference in the reports of my experience contained in the story and the reports of what I heard from others is that I am emotionally involved in the story of my own experience, whereas I receive the stories of others as if they are 'rational'. Others would tell this story differently. Those who Charles referred to as not making the effort required would probably tell this story with some irony. They may report Jane's cathartic response with skepticism. Their resistance to the training method and their possible fear of learning may become resistance to organisational plans for change. These are not the rational responses we assume will be the basis for action. These are the micro level responses that make up the fabric of relations in the organisation which are described as complex responsive processes.

### Deconstruction

Because this is a constructed story some of the words are words I chose to make a point, and some are words I heard which seemed interesting. There are words I may have heard but they weren't resonant and so I haven't reported them. So, there are multiple filters applied to the narrative and this is often the case in personal narratives.

Jane chose to describe her experience as confronting, saying that she felt she had been put on the spot. This was not an uncommon experience of those involved in the leader training and I chose this quote because it seemed strange to me that people were surprised that leader training was confronting. I think the binary opposition here is between theory and practice. The trainees expected a transfer of knowledge not an experience of what leading might feel like. The disconnection between living in a conceptual world and the world of human relatedness is evident in this story. The struggle that occurs between two people as they construct the future of an organisation is visceral although it is played out in conceptual terms. Beliefs will be challenged and people will need to change who they believe they are.

For Jane this was "cathartic", an interesting choice of word. My sense of this is that Jane let something go, but what was it that she let go? She mentioned "internal traits" which I interpret as habits. She saw these as "failings" but they could also be seen simply as preferences that determined her choices. They only become failings in the context of relational expectations either at the interpersonal level or in terms of organisational objectives or expected behaviours. Jane's experience of the training is consonant with my experience of interaction with others within an organisational context. The interaction is mutually formative. We might say that we give and take something from each interaction, but the phrase 'giving and taking' doesn't quite express what happens. It might be better to say that we each give away something and the part we give away changes us slightly.

The way Robert talks about his experience is conceptual. The training was 'beneficial'. There is no hint of a personal change, he seems detached from the experience. While Robert talks about himself as an 'other', Charles chooses to talk about others and it is not clear if he is talking about his own experience. His observation of others is that a 'problem with their attitude' meant that they weren't 'up for the challenge'. These seem to be metaphors drawn from sport or other similar competitive pursuits. Learning about yourself becomes a contest with a vague and shadowy opponent. That opponent seems to be inside us and is the agent causing Jane's 'internal traits' that are causing her to 'fail'. In both cases, Charles and Jane are struggling against their inability to achieve organisational and maybe social or interpersonal objectives. Both assume the existence of such objectives. Jane's 'failings' reflect Charles view that others weren't successful because their attitude meant that they weren't up for the challenge.

In both cases Jane and Charles are talking about a personal struggle to meet expectations. The immediate expectation of their training context was to reveal something about themselves that might be holding them back from better performance as leaders.

My own telling of this story reveals a bias that I had assumed from others' telling of their story. I said that the "facilitators went looking for an event" as if they were hunters hunting game. They knew that almost everyone had a memory of an event which had emotional richness and their premise was that this event influenced how people responded to the circumstance presented to them.

After observing this training technique I can see the benefit in connecting people with their experiences and emotions to drag them away from a conceptual knowledge oriented way of learning. Jane's description is about how she felt whereas Robert and Charles are more conceptual. Charles demonstrates a view that 'attitude' controls access to success. 'Attitude' is an interesting word to use because I think it indicates a willingness to allow oneself to enter a relation with someone else in an emotional way rather than simply at a conceptual level. The objections to the training approach were often similar to this idea, and it seems to be that people I spoke to had a varying range of views about the acceptability of entering an emotional relationship in a public 'training' event. Disclosure of any weakness in front of others is confronting and this training exercise was directed at that. Jane's observation that it was cathartic shows that such disclosure releases something and those that benefited from this exercise had similar views.

There is a strong binary suggested in this story. People either did or didn't respond well to this training exercise. My suggestion is that this was determined by 'attitude' and this is some measure of willingness to disclose 'failings' in public. I know from my own experience that the 'cathartic' response doesn't happen while we are thinking privately about the event; it comes when we disclose our experience in public to others. John's enigmatic statement of knowing what the guilt is about seems to fit into this story as well. The performance challenge for John was his behaviours. He was aware of this challenge because it is part of his story, but it seems he connected together some previous event and the way he behaved. This simple causal connection is simplistic but even a simple step towards reflection on his relatedness appears to have been helpful for John.

### Critical analysis

There is an assumption in my story that an organisation has the right to access participants' emotional response to their experiences as a way to improve their performance in pursuing the organisation's objectives. In my narrative as the narrator I tell my own story in a positive way. As a senior manager in the organisation I have told this story many times as justification for our decisions. Until now I have never publicly questioned my own behaviour in promoting the right of the organisation to pursue its own goals by challenging 'attitudes' and promoting 'cathartic' experiences.

I was complicit in deciding to use this particular training approach and so responsible for the anxiety experienced by those training participants who were not prepared to enter into public disclosure of personal experience. When interpreted as an exercise in performativity it can be seen as an attempt to mould individual identities by forcing public disclosure in a relational context. My only defence is ignorance as a result of an unexamined belief in an implicit agreement between the organisation and its members regarding mutual expectations. One such unexamined expectation is that the organisation will provide learning experiences and that the participants in those training events will have an 'attitude' that allows them to enter willingly into the training provided, including apparently training that seeks to alter the participants' identity.

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) identified identity regulation as a means of management control. Identity formation and identity regulation are implicit in the 'deal' between organisations and their members. The implicit nature of this 'deal' is the source of anxiety and resistance to conform and submit to regulation.

In the terms described by Carroll and Levy (2010) I am both an object and a subject in this management control. My identity has been partially formed as an object of the organisation to the extent that I have adopted a belief in the right of the organisation to act formatively towards the identities of its members. In entering into leadership training I was to some extent a "subject who decides" (Carroll and Levy 2010 p 212). I had been complicit in sending

people into leadership development, I had evaluated the leadership training, and I entered the training with a clear view of what was intended. In admitting this I am fully aware that of all the participants who entered training I was probably the most aware of what was intended in terms of identity formation while not at the time having an understanding of the role of the training in identity regulation.

Carroll and Levy argue that leader development should enact the practices it is attempting to instill. They doubt that "anxiety, conformity, regulation, and resistance" would be part of this but that "reframing, recursivity, and polyphonic dialogue" would be (Carroll and Levy 2010 p. 228). The narratives that Carroll and Levy use to illustrate their position are accounts by trainees of their progress through leader development. Their suggestions for reframing, recursivity, and polyphonic dialogue have helped guide the way I have presented my own narrative.

In my narrative I chart my own development in understanding leader development as identity formation and regulation. To follow Carroll and Levy's suggestion that leader development should enact the practices of 'leadership', I need to be able to form a discourse that allows me to address my leading role in leader development while at the same time recognising the anxiety and resistance inherent in organisation-member relationships. My reflective, reflexive, and critical inquiry helps me do this. As I write this thesis I am changing my conversations with my colleagues. I am trying to reveal somehow the complex responsive processes we are engaged in and the power dimensions of our relations. I try to do this in words which are non-conceptual and contextual, by which I mean embedded in the circumstances of the conversation and relevant to the moment of the conversation. I am finding this to be challenging because everyday conversations involve people with a range of views, perceptions, preferences and orientations, and more importantly habituated world-views. This is the reality of leading. We can only engage with others in the moment and in a way that connects how we as participants are being.

In changing my own view of 'leadership' I continue to search for its essence, if it exists. I have not moved far away from the simple idea of influence toward a shared goal. I have adopted a practice orientation based on performative discourse. I have tried to separate this from the question of how we choose to engage with others.

How we engage with others gives rise to a plethora of qualifiers often applied to leadership (authentic, toxic, relational, charismatic and so on). For example, I think 'authentic leadership' may say less about leadership than it does about authenticity. The two words sit beside each other and are related but independent. They do not create a type of leadership and we shouldn't reify these word combinations. Authenticity is something we seek in our relations with others and so it is a positive qualifier of leadership. It is also important for our relationships with managers, friends, and colleagues. Choices as leaders are no different to other choices we make that may impact others. We are affected by ethical and moral considerations when we make these choices. Strength in opposing unethical behaviour is not a characteristic of 'leadership', it is a quality of being a person and a part of our identity.

Carroll and Levy (2010) introduce a complication to my narrative. If leadership development should enact the practices of 'leadership', what are the practices of 'leadership'? If I exclude the qualifiers to the word 'leadership' that simply apply attractive or unattractive aspects of human being, what remains is the idea of influence towards the pursuit of shared goals. Are the practices of influence applied to pursuit of shared goals different to practices used in other types of influence? It seems unlikely and in this case it becomes increasingly difficult to point to any practices that are specific to leadership. It is possible that there are a collection of practices that together constitute leadership and possibly Carroll and Levy's suggestion of the narrative practices of reframing, recursivity, and polyphonic dialogue are such a collection. It would seem unwise to limit the practice of leading to purely discursive practices and ignore what Alvesson

and Willmott (2002, p. 639) refer to as more somatic and tacit aspects of social interaction.

### ***Story 3 - Resistance***

*I'm reading through survey results. The questions posed to each participant in the survey were what we as a company should start doing, stop doing, and continue doing. I read the comments of a person the survey methodology classifies as 'disengaged'. The respondent suggests that the company should trust their staff and provide flexibility to do things differently because not all parts of the business needed to fit into the same mould and operate the same way.*

*I feel angry at this. It is clearly a statement of resistance, just another person saying "let me do what I want to do".*

*The respondent continues that the company should realise that "the greatest asset to this company is its people so start treating them like you care for them and their opinion rather than barrel on, fulfilling management's pie in the sky vision". Management should show leadership, show some courage and "be prepared to have hard conversations - don't be yes men all the time - don't reward senior leaders by giving them roles in the new plan when they haven't performed in their previous role". Management need to consult staff to find out what they need in terms of systems, support, structure. They should stop "telling us the way it is going to be done, which is usually far removed from what the business needs to operate effectively".*

*I don't know where this opinion comes from. As one of the senior managers being blamed I know we have continually consulted with staff and expect line managers to do the same. This survey is part of our consultation. Why don't our people get it? So frustrating.*

*I go back to the respondent's opinion. Apparently we should "stop trying to fix something that is not broken". The recent "restructure has caused severe consequences for high performing businesses, things did not need to change. We did not need to merge and the reasons we were given for the merge were clearly not the real drivers behind the decision; morale has dropped". Management should "stop making decisions that are focused on financial gains; put the money into the employees rather than acquisitions, marketing, getting awards. Spend it on personal development, better food for Friday night drinks; spend it on things that the employees can relate to and feel rewarded for the work they do. The worker ants don't see the benefits of all the money they make for the company". Generally just "stop trying to control us, we know how to do our job. Just sit back and let us get on with it".*

*There seems so much resistance here. I feel deflated that despite the work we've done to clarify direction and consult with people there is so much resistance.*

## Reflection

This is a story about my response to a survey respondent who is clearly unimpressed by my work. The story interleaves the respondent's actual words with my own description of how I feel when I read this and similar responses.

The opinions of this respondent are not unique. Not all respondents are negative, and in fact some responses are very positive. We've undertaken staff surveys in various forms over the last 15 years. In that time we have grown from less than a thousand people to over 4,000 people. Our more recent surveys have had good response rates, with the last two surveys both having around 1500 responses.

Our surveys have differed from time to time. We have recently used an outsourced provider while previously we developed our own questions. The surveys have generally used a Likert scale, with ratings from strongly disagree to strongly agree. However in all cases we've always included one or two questions that allow people to provide a more expansive opinion. I read through comments to 'hear' what people are saying.

Most people don't provide long opinions, often providing just one or two word responses. Others take the opportunity to write extensively about how they feel about what they either like or dislike. The response I've chosen here is one of the more extensive comments. I chose this one because I reacted to it and I'm interested in why this person's opinion elicited my response.

I recognize in this and similar responses a pattern of resistance by our staff to the control inherent in organisational life. Change in organisations has been described as an inherently political process (Lawrence, Malhotra & Morris 2012, p. 102). The constant need for change and the power aspects of knowledge have been noted as characteristics of professional service firms (Lachman & Greenwood 1996, pp. 563-7). The emphasis on knowledge work in consultancy firms reduces the significance of managers in the production of work (Kärreman & Alvesson 2009, p. 1116). Kärreman and Alvesson write about clashing discourses of "Ambition and Autonomy" (ibid,

p. 1116) and describe these in terms of a constant tension between compliance and resistance, and what they describe as "counter resistance" (ibid, p. 1121).

Kärreman and Alvesson's description of the hegemonic dynamics within a professional consulting firm are resonant with my own experience in management. Although I have chosen a single response plucked from a staff survey, it is not in my experience an uncommon challenge to managers in the organisation in which I work. Although these survey responses are treated confidentially, the part of the organisation within which the respondent works is immediately recognizable to me because the opinions expressed are part of a continuing discourse of resistance which is particularly strong in specific parts of the organisation. It is easy to identify this as a story that this particular group of people tell to and about themselves. This story creates their shared identity and differentiates them from others, including the managers outside their group who determine rules and behaviours to which they are required to comply.

So this story is about my visceral response to resistance within a dynamic hegemonic relational work environment. Behind the visceral response is my own beliefs and values around professional work. As I've reflected on my experience I have been forced to step back in time to when I was in the same role that the respondent is in now. I have been forced to assess how I felt towards management at that time and how I resisted their efforts to control the way I behaved. This discloses a contradiction between how I felt about myself and my work then and how I expect people to behave now.

Behind the contradiction is the change in power and accountability between my previous roles and my current role. I have always felt responsible for the work that I do. I see my career progression as a series of self-selecting choices where I have chosen to do the type of work that suits me best. As a result I believe I have a strong orientation toward my work and a strong sense of responsibility for the outcomes of my work. Previously as a young project manager I argued against the interests of our clients and in favour of the beneficiaries of the projects we implemented. I hear the same arguments

from our younger staff now; arguments that support the objectives of the beneficiaries or those who are being protected or supported by our work, and arguments against the corporate objectives of maximising returns to shareholders. These are arguments of principle but also reveal a struggle for autonomy. In this struggle principles such as 'truth in science' or 'best outcomes for beneficiaries' are set against the principle of providing the best return for shareholders.

This reflection has opened up a new response from me. From a feeling of frustration and anger on reading the survey response I have moved to a feeling of sympathy for those who reflect my memories of my own younger self. My visceral response can be seen as a response against what I have become and my own relationship with the way I was.

#### Reflexive analysis

One of the reflexive questions in my methodology is about how I influenced the situation that I've described. I was one of a few people who encouraged and designed our in-house surveys so I take responsibility for the opportunity for people to rage against their situation. Despite that, I couldn't help feeling angry and frustrated at the result. No amount of rationalizing about the 'normal distribution' of responses can moderate the feeling of failure when confronted by complete dismissal of one's efforts.

Even as I write my reflection and reflexive analysis I can feel my response and I can't entirely explain its somatic nature. I now find it difficult to balance my feeling of frustration with the empathy I feel for people who are much like my younger self. There is a struggle happening in my own response which seems analogous to the struggle I see happening within the organisation. Given the fundamental metaphor of organisation as a body this at first seems to be a reasonable analogy. The simple psychological premise of the experiential training exercise described in the previous critical incident description is that people's self-story of a significant event affects their subsequent behaviour. Knowledge of this can help people to behave differently, but prior to gaining that knowledge the contradictions between expectations and performance can lead to frustration and maybe even guilt.

My own contradictions and doubts now indicate a growing sense of responsibility for idealizing the benefits of behavioural compliance in terms of a greater good as measured by shareholder returns.

I see clearly now that I am a product of this organisation. My identity has been forged through my work and my compliance with the ideals of the organisation. My resistance has given way to advocacy for the things I previously resisted. That conversion has become embodied to the extent that I now feel resistance to those ideals as emotions. The clarity of this has come from seeing my younger self in the words of the respondent. My colleagues over the past few years have come from different backgrounds and may not be able to recognize themselves in the words of survey respondents; they may not see themselves in the Other.

I wonder now whether my response to future similar criticism will be different; will knowledge change my visceral response? I think that as long as I am fighting against my younger self my sense of identity will be compromised. If leadership development is identity development the outcomes may be far from comfortable. My view now is that my own struggle with an identity as a leader is unresolved, and may remain unresolvable because the shared purpose of the organisation has been fractured as it has grown and become more geographically dispersed. It is a different organisation now and roles are different. There seems to be a limited possibility for a human discourse within the organisation that continuously addresses the tradeoffs between personal autonomy and organisational compliance. I use the phrase 'human discourse' to differentiate person to person conversations from organisational communications intended to overpower resistance by their sheer frequency and gloss.

### Deconstruction

This is a narrative using the words of a survey respondent supplemented by my own editorializing. As such there are two discourses intertwined: the discourse of resistance from the respondent and the discourse of control represented by my response. The language for the two discourses is different.

The respondent's language is direct: "let me do what I want to do". This is a person who is not going to miss the opportunity to fire a shot in an on-going battle. The respondent confidently asserts the power base of workers in a knowledge intensive business by saying that "the greatest asset to this company is its people" and this is offered as an unarguable basis for the demand to "start treating them like you care for them and their opinion rather than barrel on, fulfilling management's pie in the sky vision". There is a lot contained in this, including an assertion that management doesn't care for the people who work for the company, that the staff's opinion is not valued, and that the management's vision for the company has no relevance or importance for staff. The powerful assertions contained in these initial words are the reason for my emotional response. I will never know whether the respondent was aware of the emotive power of these assertions but as I delve into these views I can see why my emotional response was so strong.

The assertion is an inversion of what could be described as the golden rule of corporate strategy. In such a view, a corporate vision is the flag around which the organisation's members rally in their pursuit of the organisation's objectives. The respondent's ambit claim attacks this golden rule directly and in so doing threatens the organisation's reason for existence. The two counter positions are now laid out clearly. On the one hand is the corporate view of aligning people around objectives to benefit shareholders and on the other hand is the view that the organisation's reason for existence is to benefit its employees and that the employees know best how that can be done.

Making this binary choice clear makes the subsequent assertions clear because they can only make sense under one of the two binary assertions. From one perspective, if managers have not acted in favour of employees and against the shareholder's interests then it is reasonable to say that senior leaders haven't "performed in their previous role" and that what is proposed is "usually far removed from what the business needs to operate effectively". From the other perspective the statements are clearly nonsensical.

It also becomes clear why the respondent can assert that the reasons given for a business decision "were clearly not the real drivers behind the decision". The binary separation of objectives is laid out clearly in the final sentences of the respondent's assertions. The wealth created by the company should be diverted to employees and not shareholders: We should "put the money into the employees rather than acquisitions, marketing, getting awards", it should go to "personal development, better food for Friday night drinks", things "that the employees can relate to and feel rewarded for the work they do". From this perspective it also makes sense that the best way to achieve this redirection of wealth is for management to just "sit back and let us get on with it", which could be interpreted as getting on with the work done for clients or the redirection of wealth to employees and away from shareholders.

My own words are the words I used when I first wrote this narrative and are not the words I would use now. Having seen my younger self in the respondent and having exposed the binary power structure of the narrative I have changed my view of the story. Whereas my initial construction of myself relied on my current corporatized identity I can now see the lines along which the power dynamic is set. The binary opposition of employee and management objectives within the company is the basis for employee resistance as well as management's calls for compliance. I can find personal failure in my own performative work in contributing to the construction of the company's leadership discourse. The binary opposition of objectives should have been addressed directly and in human terms rather than the corporate language of conceptual aspirations.

### Critical analysis

Throughout my career as I have advanced from being a consultant and project manager I have slowly evolved my understanding of the purpose of the organisation within which I worked. This slow evolution has been aided by roles including CEO of one of our businesses and a member of the parent company's Board of Directors. I've also had formal education in corporate governance. Despite this it is only in the past few years that I have become

aware that the common view of corporate governance is contested and the view that company should be directed towards the interests of their shareholders is countered by a view that it is the interests of a broader group of stakeholders that should be prioritized (Ghoshal 2005; Prahalad 1994).

One side of this argument is the side presented by Michael Jensen (Jensen 2001; Jensen & Meckling 1976). In Jensen's view stakeholder theory "plays into the hands of special interests that wish to use the resources of corporations for their own ends" (Jensen 2001 p.21). The view opposed to stakeholder theory is agency theory, under which simple goals are set for management that align the company's results with shareholders rewards. It is important that these goals can be effectively measured, and for companies these goals are usually expressed in terms of maximizing the return to shareholders. Agency theory suggests that the result of having multiple objectives is the same as having no objectives at all. Counter to this, Ghoshal argues that alignment of management rewards to a single objective is a factor in massive corporate collapses such as Enron (Ghoshal 2005 p.76).

These global debates over stakeholder and shareholder interests are reflected in the frustration I felt at the survey response. I had adopted a view aligned with agency theory in which managers are simply agents acting in the interests of shareholders. The survey respondent represented a clear view in favour of prioritizing one group of stakeholders, the employees. My memory of my younger self recalled times when I prioritized outcomes for project beneficiaries ahead of my own interests and probably the interests of other stakeholders.

The resolution of these competing interests is the object of power struggles exhibited by calls for compliance and employee resistance. There is an extensive foundation of theory which has been directed towards power in social groups including organisations. For example, Foucault's formulation of governmentality describes a complex form of power where the ruler and the ruled mutually constitute each other. As Rose (1999, p. 18) puts it "(a) certain kind of reason ... makes possible both the exercise of government

and its critique". Rose (1999, p. 51) later states that "thought becomes governmental to the extent that it becomes technical, it attaches itself to a technology for its realisation", and that these technologies are "imbued with the aspirations for the shaping of conduct in the hope of producing certain desired effects and averting certain undesired events" (Rose 1999, p. 52). Rose provides management science as an example of a human technology that realises the aspiration of shaping conduct. The critical incident description in this section provides an example of how these power dynamics are expressed by participants in the struggle.

The role of leaders in a complex network of organisational obligations and accountabilities is set against the abstraction of leadership as influencing others to work towards a shared vision. It begs the question of whether the leader is free to follow their own vision and how individual visions constitute the shared vision. The question of freedom is fundamental to this problematization. Rose presents the political reality of freedom as "a set of practices, devices, relations of self to self and self to others, of freedom as always practical, technical, contested, involving relations of subordination and privilege" which "opens up the possibility of freedom as neither a state of being nor a constitutional form but as a politics of life" (Rose 1999, p. 94).

Rose's genealogy of freedom and his observation about freedom as a set of technologies is particularly germane to the experience of leading in a large organisation. There is a paradox inherent in recognizing that freedom for both the leader and their followers is about adopting a set of practices for self-domination.

Another paradox is the concept of undecidability. Organisational processes and systems are largely attempts to deparadoxify this paradox. When organisational processes break down, rationality is replaced by motivation and the exercise of human autonomy and perception (Seidl, Becker & Luhmann 2005, p. 103). The simplification of agency theory to require just one objective masks the true complexity of the organisation.

To overcome paradoxes that arise from our attempts to deparadoxify the organisation we trained leaders in communication skills, to identify non-overlapping interpretive horizons by listening for background conversations, and through structured conversation to merge those horizons so that coordinated action towards shared objectives is possible. Such action by leaders maintains autopoietic, self-sustaining, intrinsically complex organisations by immersion in the complex responsive processes of relating.

Habermas (1984, 1987) appeals to communicative rationality as a way of mutually agreeing decision processes by establishing the values that will underpin decision logic. My realisation of the differing objective choices made by the survey respondent and myself is an example of this. Without agreement on objectives a power struggle appears as an assertion of 'my choice of objective over yours'. Lack of clarity about what choices are being made and what methodologies of choosing have been pre-agreed becomes the source of much argument in organisations. A common response seems to be a reliance on arbitrary authority to cut off argumentation and restore efficiency to decision making by asserting a simple decision methodology based on simple shareholder objectives.

The struggle for power disclosed in the views of the survey respondent results from failure to communicate how and why decisions are made. The economic imperative of maximizing organisational output and minimizing costs means the time available for communicating is minimized and authority fills the gap. While sense making still needs to be discursively negotiated, the economic imperative will replace full discourse with authoritative direction. When this is understood and accepted as contributory to organisational objectives such as profit maximization, arbitrary exercise of power will be seen as an efficient means of providing pre-digested meaning to required organisational action.

One outcome of this logic is the association of arbitrary exercises of power with the role of leaders. In lieu of the resources that would allow discursive processes to provide comprehensive understanding of what action is needed to achieve goals, leaders provide direction justified by their position of

authority or authority they provide through their skills in sense making discourse. This is more likely to be the case than an explicitly negotiated method for resolving power struggles but will always only be partially successful in removing resistance.

Within our company the conditions that created the possibility for us to imagine a 'leadership culture' were a rapidly changing context within which we wanted to exercise control through a balance between authority and empowerment. The diversity of cultures within the organisation was a result of the aggregation of the individual businesses that had been acquired. While I was working across these businesses it was easy to see significant differences between local management practices, such as the way meetings were organized, what was discussed, and the power relationships within groups.

Professional service organisations are staffed with well-educated articulate people with views on how an organisation should operate. The connection between knowledge and power is apparent in nearly every management conversation. Within an engineering and science based organisation the normal epistemic stance is positivist; knowledge is seen as true or false in its relation to the way the world is. In these conditions management discussions often become contests about knowledge and assertions that individual viewpoints should be adopted as true reflections of the way things are.

I expected our leader training with its constructionist epistemic stance to influence the types of conversations in which managers engaged in the normal course of their work. It became clear that many leaders maintained a dominant positivist stance. Newly trained leaders were returned to the organisation with a modified worldview at odds with their followers. They were equipped with a set of practices that were significantly different to the existing management practices. The specific outcome at the individual level was for them to act as leaders, but an implied outcome was to change the culture of the organisation through their actions and through others' emulation of their 'leadership' practices. In some cases this happened. I

witnessed a number of occasions where people trained as leaders used their adopted practices to change the direction of a meeting or discussion. I also saw people who used the jargon learned through their training without any apparent understanding of the purpose of the communicative practices they had been taught. I also saw people use the practices they had learned to further their individual interests over those of their peers or the business.

On the basis of my own experience it appears there is a greater visceral response to power within an organisation than there is an understanding of the constitution of power relationships. While I now better appreciate the power struggles within our organisation, I also recognize the limited resources available to pursue a truly communicative rationality within the organisation.

#### ***Story 4 - A contested decision***

*It was a large meeting. The purpose was to introduce an initiative of the management team to a wider audience. It was an important decision that would impact on many people.*

*Susan stood up to present the work of the management team. Part way through the presentation, Michael interrupted: "It sounds like this decision has already been made?". Susan paused before answering: "We believe that there is one clear way forward". A number of people tried to speak at once. The mood was tense. One after another people complained that they should have been consulted. Susan tried to calm the group but it was clear that her assurances were not being accepted.*

*Suddenly Susan held up her hand and waited for silence. Slowly the buzz around the room subsided. Susan spoke: "I don't think we anticipated the importance of this decision for all of you. I want to open up the conversation with the promise that if you put a compelling argument for an alternative decision outcome we will consider it as a group and make the decision this group believes is best". A number of the management team looked concerned. They had discussed this at length; what was Susan doing re-opening the decision?*

*Paul spoke first. He could see why the management team had made the decision they did but had we considered all the factors, some of which he mentioned. Susan listened carefully and answered Paul's question respectfully. Yes, those factors had been considered and she explained the conclusions the management team had drawn. As the conversation ebbed and flowed the mood changed. People engaged in the discussion and offered views and opinions. Several of the management team stepped in to support Susan, also adopting her respectful manner.*

*It became clear that there were no compelling reasons to decide anything different to what had been already presented. As a group there seemed to be a consensus that the decision was the right decision.*

*Michael stood up and thanked Susan for the way she had re-opened the discussion and the group spontaneously applauded. I remember thinking that Susan had showed us all a strong way to lead.*

### Reflection

This is a story that I've used several times when I've been talking about leadership. Maybe I like it because I prefer consultative approaches, but I also like the sense of improvisation. Susan felt the mood of the group was against her but she was also confident that the decision was the right one. Susan risked losing the respect of her management team if she was forced to reverse her decision but she risked losing the support of the broader organisation if she didn't involve people in the decision.

What is missing from this story is my experience of it. I was one of the management team. I was sitting in the audience among those who objected to the way the decision had been made. I felt that Susan was taking a dangerous path in re-opening the decision for discussion. I recalled the long tense discussions we had had in our management meeting and the difficult resolution. To re-start the discussion felt like a betrayal. I also felt conflicted because I wanted people to feel that they could own the decision but I wasn't sure if a resolution in this larger group was possible. We couldn't afford to delay the decision; the impact of leaving the room without a clear decision would be a rift between the management team and the broader group of managers.

I thought Susan risked losing some of her authority, some of the management team's authority, and so by extension some of my own authority. I didn't expect that the problem would be resolved through discussion.

I have identified a contradiction in my way of thinking about this situation. I describe myself as consultative but I was anxious about including more discussion and anxious that a different decision would be taken. The root of this contradiction seems to be my need to 'get things done'. There was a fear on my part that opening up a new discussion would delay the start of action.

Initially I didn't know how to resolve this contradiction. What I lacked was trust. Susan showed trust but listened carefully and engaged in a genuine discussion. From my perspective I felt that all my energy for this issue had been exhausted and I did not want to spend more energy to enroll a new group of people. The easier way in the short term was simply to say "the decision has been made". It seems, on the basis of this reflection, that a leader's work can never be assumed to be completed. There is always a possibility of new resistance to be faced. Trust, courage, and stamina are all qualities that Susan demonstrated in leading this group to an outcome.

### Reflexive analysis

I experienced this as someone who had invested emotionally in the decision and was anxious not only that the decision would be re-opened but that I would lose some small part of my authority if the decision was reversed. Looking back now I'm surprised at this realisation of anxiety. I did not act to change the conversation, to assert that the decision should stand. If I were to do so I would have challenged Susan's authority and opened another rift within the group. It didn't occur to me to do that and so I trusted Susan's intuition.

Although I, and the other members of the Management Team, did not intervene, our presence in the audience provided support to Susan. Possibly our anxiety was communicated by our demeanor and this may have been picked up by other members of the audience. But no one spoke against Susan. I could have been different. I could have expressed my concern at reopening the discussion after the decision had been made. I could have asserted our structural authority to make the decision and to impose it on the organisation. To do so would have been an indication that we didn't trust Susan's ability to lead the group to the outcome that we as a team had arrived at. To do so would have been to indicate that we valued our structural authority over people's need to be heard and to contribute to our future.

I had worked extensively in projects with a high level of community consultation. This experience supported my trust in Susan. I had been

through many tense situations similar to this where disputed decisions were challenged. In many cases these were facilitated by people who had been trained and were experienced in participatory development. But I knew Susan wasn't and that in this circumstance she was following an intuition. As it turned out her instinct was right, but it is easy to imagine another person following my initial impulse to assert structural authority. To imagine this alternative story is to imagine an outcome that would have contributed very differently to the future of the organisation.

I've used the word 'intuition' to explain why Susan acted the way she did and why I may have acted differently. Another way to express this is in terms of my bias or preference for modes of acting. I like to think of myself as consultative but under pressure I seem to lose this. I remember during leader training when I was talking to my peers about an experience that I felt had been formative, I started by describing myself as patient but halfway through my description I realised that I'm not. It seems that 'patience' was a story I used to justify not acting.

Ford and Harding argue that "leadership training programmes invite participants to seduce themselves into the concept of leadership, and then limit the range of possibilities of being within that identity of leader" (Ford & Harding 2007, p. 486). They identify psychological instruments, particularly MBTI, as a means of controlling leader identity development. Like many people in management roles in organisations I've been subject to psychological assessment and when I look back at the results of those assessments they clearly indicate a tendency to dominance. Despite that, and maybe because of the work I had done in participatory development project, I had been telling myself a story about myself that suggested that I was patient and consultative. For me, my experience and the results of psychological testing were at odds and I seem to be in one of two states between patient consultative working and authoritative dominance.

Faced with the anxiety I felt during Susan's performance I need to confront the story I have been telling myself. Under pressure can I sustain the role I have been acting or will I revert to my preference for dominance? Having

worked in a participatory context I had enough faith in the process that Susan initiated to let it run its course but that trust was not enough to prevent my anxiety. How much anxiety would have tipped me over the edge and caused me to step in and possibly change the course of the discussion. While the decision we were discussing may not have been so important that a different outcome would have changed the future of the company, it may well have been. In this case a change in the outcome of the discussion may have had significant impact of the future of the company. There is a degree of contingency in this; my imagined intervention may have had an impact on the discussion or it may not. That impact may have cause people to have a different view of the management team and it might have impacted people's attitude to whether to commit to the future or to look for employment elsewhere. The contingency hinged on my behavioural preference and my experience of and trust in participatory process.

Having recognized the potential contingencies attached to my possible intervention, what can I suppose about the non-intervention of others? I know that other members of the management team had not had my experience with participatory methods but maybe I can also suppose that they didn't have my level of anxiety as I balanced conflicting identities. Now that I recall what happened, one of our team did try to put forward the view that the decision was final but the non-members of the team just spoke over the top of him. His opinion had no impact on the discussion. There seemed to be a total focus on what Susan was doing and the counter view was simply ignored.

### Deconstruction

I have used the words 'participatory' and 'consultative' liberally in this reflection. I have also talked about my experience in participatory development projects and my respect for process. It occurs to me that the importance I place on this memory is founded in my own struggle to resolve my preference for dominance with the story I tell myself about being consultative.

It is clear from the reflexive analysis above that I have not included what the other members of the team or the broader audience felt about this meeting. It is possible that seeing this as a lesson in 'leadership' was a very personal response. I have certainly constructed this story in a way that emphasizes the 'lesson' I learned about leading. Is this just another story I'm telling myself? If so it is a story that has encouraged me to act differently because I value the lesson that I learned.

I constructed this story from memory but it is a real story of an event that had an emotional impact on me. The anxiety I felt was real. I'm not sure how real the 'mood' of the group was and whether that was simply a projection of my own anxiety. The 'mood in the room' is a phrase that I've heard before but now that I write about it I'm unsure whether such a thing is possible. It seems that at the very least it describes a group of individuals having the same emotions at the same time. How did I know that and why was it important to the story? In the story many people tried to speak at once, and the result was a 'buzz' throughout the room. I've written that the mood was tense. My memory is of tension but if my perception or memory were better I could have described in more detail what I saw, how the tone of peoples' voices indicated seriousness and concern or how some people's faces were flushed with anger or fear. I don't actually remember that this was the case; what I recalled was that the mood was tense. This is important because the resolution of the issue coincided with this tension dispersing. Again I imagine that people's faces stopped being flushed, voices moderated, and the buzz subsided, but all that remains is the memory of a 'mood' passing.

### Critical analysis

A key element in my story is trust. The narrative describes how a group of people could not accept the decision of a subset of its members until they had worked through the same decision themselves. There was very little trust of the decision process that the management team had worked through. Susan showed considerable trust that the broader group would come to the same decision. The management team showed a degree of trust in not

intervening in the discussion. However, my level of anxiety indicated that from my point of view my trust was not complete.

I've characterized my anxiety as a wavering in my trust in Susan's ability to 'lead' the group towards the decision we had already taken. I've indicated that my bias towards dominance may have taken me along a different path by asserting the power provided by the structure of the organisation. The situation discloses the binary distinction between human discourse and power exercised through systemic structures.

If we only accept knowledge that is supported empirically then concepts such as values cannot be proven and must as a consequence be arbitrarily chosen. If this is combined with a belief that there is a best means to achieve an end, the resulting approach seeks to find the best means to achieve arbitrarily chosen ends. To counter this absurdity, Habermas proposes a communicative rationality based in hermeneutics and an emancipatory science founded in critical theory that allows for ends as well as means to be examined and agreed as valid.

Habermas adapts the concept of lifeworld to describe the stock of “skills, competences and knowledge that ordinary members of society use, in order to negotiate their way through everyday life, to interact with other people, and ultimately to create and maintain social relationships” (Edgar 2006, p. 89). Habermas developed this concept of the lifeworld while also acknowledging the constructed nature of society:

The concept of the lifeworld that emerges from the conceptual perspective of communicative action has only limited analytical and empirical range. I would therefore like to propose ... that we conceive of societies simultaneously as systems and lifeworlds (Habermas 1987, p. 118).

As noted by Edgar, the tension between the lifeworld and system is central to Habermas's understanding of contemporary society. “Habermas's contention is that as societies become larger and more complex, so the resources of the lifeworld are stretched to breaking point ... by the demands

of organising social interaction.” (Edgar 2006, p. 90). Habermas observes that:

Actors’ motives were at first under the control of the concrete value orientations of kinship rules; in the end, the generalization of motives and values goes so far that abstract obedience to law becomes the only normative condition that actors have to meet in formally organized domains of action (Habermas 1987, p. 180).

This process of value generalisation, in Habermas's view, gives rise to two tendencies. The first tendency is the detachment of communicative action from concrete and traditional normative behaviour patterns, which shifts the burden of “social integration ... to processes of consensus formation in language” (ibid). The second tendency is that “freeing the communicative action from particular value orientation also forces the separation of action oriented to success from action oriented to mutual understanding” (ibid). The result is that space opens up for subsystems of purposive rational action.

In social life, including life in organisations, increased complexity has created an environment where actions towards organisational goals which define success are completely separated from actions oriented towards understanding of why those goals are important. This is a source of existential anxiety in that the definition of success is separated from an understanding of the purpose of success.

Habermas describes money and power as generalized media that have replaced more traditional media such as prestige and influence. Money and power are media because they act in ways that mediate the overburdening of human resources for social integration in complex organisational forms. They become proxies or substitutes for understanding why we are doing what we are doing. Similarly, in contemporary social settings professional reputation and commitment to values are generalized forms of communication, and are specific forms of trust.

Habermas describes the “transfer of action coordination from language to steering media” as an “uncoupling of interaction from lifeworld contexts” and that “media such as money and power ... encode a purposive-rational

attitude toward calculable amounts of value” (Habermas 1987, p. 183). Such media:

make it possible to exert generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants while bypassing processes of consensus-oriented communication. Inasmuch as they do not merely simplify linguistic communication, but replace it with symbolic generalizations of rewards and punishments, the lifeworld contexts in which processes of reaching understanding are always embedded are devalued in favour of media-steered interactions; the lifeworld is no longer needed for coordination (Habermas 1987, p. 183).

The resulting erosion of meaning and freedom is a process Habermas refers to as the colonization of the lifeworld, an inevitable but unintended consequence of the increasing complexity and scale of social systems. As Edgar notes:

as the economic systems and administrative systems intrude ... into everyday life ... so the instrumentalism inherent in systematic activity begins to erode the communicative skills that are grounded in, and that serve to maintain, the lifeworld. Good intentions may be perverted by the system, and the possibility of challenging the system, through communicative rather than instrumental reason, is inhibited (Edgar 2006, p. 21).

Habermas’s theorisation of the lifeworld and institutional systems provides analytical possibilities for how we understand 'leadership' and in this case how we interpret the story of Susan's 'leadership'. The tension between the power implicit in large scale social organisations and the limited resources of an individual (their lifeworld) is similar to the Gemmill and Oakley (1992) discussion of the myth of 'leadership'. Their discussion can be interpreted in Habermas’s terms as a failure of individuals’ lifeworld skills to cope with the complexity of current social reality resulting in anxiety that looks for relief in the myth of 'leadership'. Alternatively, in Calas and Smircich’s (1991) casting of leadership as seduction, 'leadership' can be seen as a role played by leaders in influencing followers, in good faith or not, to submit to the colonization of their lifeworlds.

An important part of Habermas’s overall theory is the concept of freedom from oppression. In contemporary organisations this may be extended to include 'seduction' as an undue influence. Gemmill and Oakley's view is that

in some cases followers willingly accept leaders whether they are good or bad because they are driven by their existential anxieties and a desire to make sense of their life in the face of overwhelming complexity. This is consistent with Habermas's argument that our institutional systems have overburdened our lifeworld capabilities and illustrates that there is a power imbalance implicit in many circumstances. If leaders are to act ethically they need to recognise when their ability to act in the face of complexity is greater than that of their followers and use that knowledge to protect the interests of all involved.

My own anxiety in this critical incident description is an example of how this plays out. My initial preference was to fall back on the structural authority that in my view gives the management team the right to assert its decision. In Habermasian terms the 'system' of structural authority is a device that acts to make organisational processes efficient. It bypasses the need to engage in broader discourse that allows people to understand why it is they are expected to do certain things. Susan appears to have sensed the need to address the resistance in the room through a communicative process. Her actions could be described in terms of what Habermas described as discourse ethics.

I read Habermas's views on discourse ethics after the incident described here. I was impressed by Susan's actions and they influenced the way I have acted in similar situations since. The framework provided by Habermas allows us to understand authority, communication, organisational values and professional reputation as means of coping with social complexity. If we combine this with Gemmill and Oakley's view that followers have a need for leaders to help them make sense of their world we can see how easily 'leadership' can become an exercise of cynical manipulation of less powerful people. Understanding of and reliance on discourse ethics provides protection against this and seems to be a characteristic that differentiates a leader's influence from a cynic's manipulation.

## ***Story 5 - Dealing with a complaint***

*Personal appraisal sessions are a common task for managers. Many organisations ask their managers to have a formal appraisal session with each of their direct reports at least every year. It is a time when managers and their staff can talk about the way they have worked together and what's expected for future performance.*

*I'm talking with Dave about how he relates to the other members of our team. Dave is a forceful person; someone who competes hard on every issue. Sometimes I see that tipping over the edge, becoming aggressive and causing others to back off from discussion. His dominance in group discussions has become a problem.*

*"Dave, I wanted to talk to you about the way you address others in our group conversations".*

*"OK, but I'm not sure what you mean" Dave responds.*

*"Have you had any feedback from other people in the team?"*

*"No." He pauses. "Is there a problem?"*

*"Yes, I think there is. You tend to attack people personally; you attack the person not the issue. I think you need to be more aware of the impact you're having on the people around you. I know that in some cases other people in the team choose not to include you in their conversations because you tend to take over. You don't listen to what others are saying".*

*I see Dave stiffen. "I work well with the team, but if I have something to say I'm not scared to say it. There are too many people in our team who are scared to say what they're thinking. I think you let people get away with not saying what they're thinking. It's always up to me to say the things other people are scared to say. I'm sorry if that offends you but that's the way I am."*

*I feel the tension between us. I feel Dave's anger building. I need to defuse this before he gets too angry.*

*"Dave, I know you believe that. I want you to see yourself now, to recognize how you feel now. This is what I'm talking about. You feel angry because I've criticized you. This is the way it starts."*

### **Reflection**

I used this story in a leader training discussion about 'leadership' practices. At that time I wrote that the complaint starts with a feeling of dissatisfaction and to turn this feeling into an action I need to transform the complaint into a request for the other person to do something specific. This is a micro level approach to leading, and in this case the desired outcome is changing behaviours that limit the effectiveness of the team. My request to Dave is that he change his way of being for the sake of organisational performance.

This story is just a fragment of this particular appraisal session. How a session such as this unfolds is very dependent on how effective the manager is in convincing their team member to recognize their behaviour and how it impacts the team. Complaints are often about how a person is being and these require a degree of reflection before a productive conversation can emerge.

As a fragment of a longer story there are many aspects of the context to this story that are missing. This fragment only really deals with the first step of the conversation. In the story I have to first deal with the possibility that the other person may be unaware of how they are being or why this would be a problem for me. Before my request can be made, a conversation about how I see the other person's way of being may be required. The story may unfold as a conversation about how I am experiencing the other and how that makes me feel, how that's a problem for me, and how that can be resolved. Of course, a real conversation opens up the possibility that both parties to the conversation will learn and adapt as a shared truth emerges. There is a possibility that Dave's complaint about me is valid and that I should be encouraging different ways of being for the other team members.

These conversations create many possibilities. The opportunity to create these possibilities happens every day and dealing with dissatisfaction and complaint is part of the social construction that managers do on a day to day basis that creates an organisation. What the story doesn't immediately reveal is how certain I am that the outcome I'm seeking is the 'right' outcome. In one possible telling of the story, I am about to subjugate Dave, to bring him into line with how I expect him to be. In another possible telling of the story, I will back off and allow Dave to dominate me and let him continue behaving the way he has been behaving.

I chose this story about Dave's dominating behaviour because of the contradiction between objecting to Dave's behaviour and the dominance of Dave by me that is implied. Creating a uniform culture within an organisation implies people acting in a way that is aligned with the desired culture. There is an implied act of submission by each person when they agree to follow an

organisation's 'rules' about what constitutes appropriate action. This can be seen as a micro version of compliance with social norms. The questions that arise are about the rights of organisations to impose such 'rules' and how far these rights extend.

### Reflexive analysis

In this story, there is an underlying assumption that I have examined my own performance and convinced myself that I am not causing the problem. When I described the issue I wanted to discuss with Dave he immediately attacked the way I manage the team. I needed to be sure before I started the conversation that I wasn't the problem. If I am not causing the problem and I want to act as a leader, I must take action to resolve the issue and this action involves negotiating an outcome in which the other person accepts the situation as I see it and agrees to change what they are doing. To do this I need the courage to overcome all the normal anxieties associated with taking a stand, such as 'I don't want to be proved wrong' and 'I don't want you to be angry or sad'. I need to be determined to get to a point where I can make a simple request to Dave.

I prepared for this meeting. Dave had a habit of blustering and denying what was being said. Under pressure Dave became aggressive and I was prepared for his reaction. I have years more experience than Dave so I'm comfortable in my role, my position, and what I'm about to say. I have had this type of conversation many times with people with more authority and presence than Dave.

The conversation may have been very different if I did not have the experience I have. The other people who worked in my team were not challenging Dave on his behaviour although they frequently complained to me about it. The situation was made worse by our corporate behaviours which included 'treat people with respect'. The other people in my team saw Dave's aggressive behaviour as disrespect for his co-workers. In several discussions with my staff it had occurred to me that it was not necessarily the case that Dave was disrespectful of his colleagues. As it turned out, Dave's own interpretation of his behaviour referenced other expressions of our

corporate behaviours, particularly acting with integrity. Dave's justification was that he was compelled to say what he thought because to submit meekly was not acting with integrity. He also explained away his aggression as passion for the truth. He could see nothing wrong in his behaviour.

In my preparation for my discussion with Dave I needed to resolve these different interpretations of what Dave's behaviour meant for Dave and for those he affected. What I knew was that my own reaction to Dave's behaviour was somatic; I could feel my body respond to Dave's aggression. Dave was competitive and I suspected that for Dave all discussions were about winning and all parties to a discussion were opponents. Others had told me that they felt the same way. This was the basis of my request to Dave. I asked him to consider whether he was stifling discussion through his dominant behaviour and if he would he know it. Dave was always so certain that he was right and so competitive in his approach that he was never looking for alternative views; his one objective appeared to be to get others to agree with his position. He was not actually listening for other views.

This was a long and emotional conversation. I used my position of authority and my experience to counter Dave's arguments. In another context I could have been accused of excessively dominating Dave but that was what was necessary to achieve the organisation's objective. In another organisation Dave's behaviour might have been accepted and in another it might have been encouraged. But in our organisation Dave's behaviour was unwelcome. If I did not address Dave's behaviour it would be apparent to the others in my team that we were not serious about the corporate behaviours that we said were core to our corporate culture.

### Deconstruction

This is my story about a specific real episode. What Dave says in this story is my recollection of what he said and so have been filtered through my own beliefs and expectations. It was an emotional discussion and so the likelihood that my 'filter' was strong is high. So the words I have chosen reveal more about me than Dave.

There are initial words that disclose to me what this story is about. 'Appraisal', 'expected' and 'performance' provide the context for the story. Immediately they reveal the power of an organisation to assert expectations of performance and to appraise a member's progress in meeting these expectations. If I asked Dave if he was comfortable with this statement he would probably say he was. And until our conversation he thought he was 'performing' well against those 'expectations'. As the conversation disclosed, he had his own interpretations of what those expectations required in terms of performance.

There is a strong metaphorical basis underlying our use of the word 'performance'. This metaphor often leads organisational researchers to refer to sport or drama as analogies for organisational life. These extended metaphors have managers as coaches or theatrical directors and organisations as playing fields, running tracks, or in the case of the theatrical metaphor the organisation is a script. We use these metaphors because we can reduce the conceptual complexities of organisational reality to a physical reality that we can experience.

The sport analogy is the easiest to construct. We can all imagine a running track and in this case appraisal becomes simple: first past the post is the winner. For Dave this is very consistent with his competitive nature. If the track becomes a football field there is more richness in the metaphor. Performance becomes more sophisticated. Not only is there running but there is a relationship with other members of the team and progress may require some backward or sideways movement to eventually move forward. A theatrical performance creates a more qualitative metaphor. Not only is performance against the written script important but creation of a believable reality is also important.

We choose multiple metaphors because none of them individually capture what it is like to be in an organisation; they simply reflect some similarity with aspects of organisational life. Metaphors of competition are reflected throughout the story in phrases such as "forceful person", "impact", "competes hard", and "attack the issue and not the person". Danger is

implicit in contests that come close to "tipping over the edge". Defensiveness is included in phrases such as "back off from discussion". Success is implied by "dominance".

One thing that characterizes organisational life is our relatedness with those around us. We use the words 'relate' and 'relationship' extensively in modern organisations. The sense of the word 'relate' ranges from 'to tell' to 'to connect'. Our relations might be the members of our extended family or social connections we have with other people. A relational theory of 'leadership' emphasizes the connectedness between leaders rather than leaders as entities. According to Uhl-Bien "relating is a constructive, ongoing process of meaning making" (2006, p. 654).

My use of the word 'relates' here simply refers to the connection between Dave and the other members of the team. Applying Uhl-Bien's description Dave's behaviour can be seen in the broader sense of how Dave and his colleagues draw meaning from their interactions and how this is used in constructing their worldview and how the organisation is constituted in that world view. Each individual already has an interpretation of the organisation and what it means in their day to day relating with others. They have already internalised the 'rules' of behaviour in that organisation. Their experience of others in the organisation and the consistency of that experience will contribute towards the sense they make of the organisation. Lack of consistency will create a different reality to that created by consistency.

A different set of metaphors is used to describe the emotional aspect of our discussion. These metaphors reflect the perceived danger in emotional battles. Hardness is threatening when I "see Dave stiffen". The emotional connection between us is envisaged as something physical that is in "tension". Dave's emotion is also physical and it is "building". It is seen as explosive, a bomb I need to "defuse".

In the end my solution to the tension is a mirror: "I want you to see yourself". The idea that we can see ourselves is used often when what we mean is that

we need to understand our identity in terms of how we relate to those around us.

The binary construction implicit in this story is whether the way we act in an organisation is right or wrong. Dave and I had differing interpretations of what constituted right and wrong behaviour. Asserting individual interpretations of this binary construction becomes an exercise in power.

### Critical analysis

The relational view of life in organisations as a constructive, ongoing process of meaning making highlights the importance of organisational discourse. My interaction with Dave is a small example of the multitude of conversations that are had or not had every day. Not having a conversation is as effective in constructing an organisation as having a conversation, but organisational outcomes will be different. The effectiveness of my conversation with Dave will affect all the other members of the team. The deliberate process of leaders relaying the direction of the organisation to their followers and influencing their followers' behaviours is an idealized account of everyday life in organisations. Often it is easier for managers to be complicit in constructing an organisational culture that results from the personal behavioural preferences of individuals. In these cases leaders become followers of their followers rather than followers of their leaders.

I see this constant struggle for individual, group and organisational identity occurring constantly in the relationships within the multiple organisational layering of leaders and followers. The complex responsive processes of relating between leaders and followers create a patterning which can be stable or dynamic. By interacting with the people around us in a way that is consistent with how we imagine the organisation to be, we collectively create an organisation that both conforms with and differs from our individually imagined organisation.

A culture that protects the interests of the members of the team against outside influences could be described as collegial. In a collegial culture people tend to act to preserve collegiality rather than disrupt it. Over time as

collegiality is embedded in culture it becomes the way of being for the people involved. Shared ideas become invisible assumptions upon which decisions are made. A boundary is created around the collegial group that preserves the interests within the boundary and resists ideas from outside. Leaders within a collegial group are supposed to be followers of someone outside the collegial group and so when there is conflict between outsiders and insiders they must choose either tension with the group or their own leader.

The collegial group is a human group constituted by human relatedness. The broader organisation is a related collection of collegiate groups where the dominant process between collegiate groups is about institutional relatedness. The 'we' within a collegiate group is a felt relationship with other people while the 'we' between collegiate groups is a conceptual institutional relationship. Emotional responses to the broader organisation are human responses to the support or threat posed by the broader institution to the individual or collegiate group. A leader may represent the institutional interests of the organisation or provide protection against the institutional threat of the organisation. In the story of my conversation with Dave I needed to choose between the external requirements of organisational behaviours and Dave's interpretation of what those behaviours meant.

Leaders in an organisation are in a state of tension between the human processes that manifest as the culture of their followers and the socially constructed and imagined organisation. Some are unable to sustain the relationship as leader of their followers and follower of their leader. When these relationships break down the result is an organisation with multiple semi-autonomous groups. The relationship between the groups then appears to become contractual, and sharing purpose across the organisation becomes problematic.

This dynamic regularly appears in meetings of peers who use the word 'we' to refer to themselves and their followers rather than a broader grouping of themselves, their peers, other collegiate groups, and their leaders. Communicative actions are directed at maintaining the integrity of the local

group and this often impacts on the integrity of the leader's peer group, resulting in a crisis of integrity and authenticity where peoples' way of acting and way of being are at odds.

Why do people behave this way? It seems to me that people can know what they need to do but the effort to maintain integrity in the face of organisational complexity is substantial. As the scale of a leader's scope of acting increases, the demands of integrity exceed individual human capability. This becomes a struggle requiring courage to persevere, to always undertake generative conversations, to be creative, open and supportive, and to work against the preferences of personality. There appears to be a limit to the scale at which each individual can be successful in this struggle. The limit to individual performance of leadership is the horizon beyond which the individual can no longer 'see' the organisation. By this I mean the scale at which they are able to experience the organisation in its human manifestations while also grasping its relationship to the imagined institutional reality; to be able to relate to people as people in the context of their physical and human reality while simultaneously seeing the relatedness of people, the abstractions of the social reality of expectations and conventions, and the institutional reality of organisational objectives, goals and rules.

From a critical viewpoint, the social construction of an organisation happens in various ways. At the human scale it is a series of conversations that make sense of the immediate work context. At the scale beyond the human scale it is a series of conceptual decisions. We can experience the human level but we can only 'think' the organisation at the conceptual level. This splits the leaders work into two types: a human level where direct human interaction is paramount, and an institutional level where management and economic concepts are the focus of attention.

Organisations emerge from the coordinated actions of many individuals through complex responsive processes. The role of leaders in organisational complex responsive processes is actioned through language. While science provides the understanding of the natural world required to design and build

physical structures, understanding social and institutional complexity does not provide a basis for leadership practitioners to 'build' organisations by predicting behaviours and performance. An understanding of social and institutional complexity reinforces the importance of practice as performance, and provides a basis from which we can see the performance of leadership as constitutive of the unfolding organisational context.

The relationship between leaders' performance and the unfolding of the organisational context constitutes the on-going construction and maintenance of organisational reality. The continual breakdown of designed organisational systems and processes requires constant human intervention at all levels of the organisation to maintain the effectiveness of the organisation in pursuing its goals.

## ***Chapter 5 Constructing a 'leadership culture'***

This chapter is an account of my involvement in our attempt to establish a 'leadership culture' through leader training. The chapter starts with a summary of the context of this attempt, which is supported by a more detailed description of the leader training in Appendix 2. The narrative then splits into three streams. I first describe the evaluation of the leader training program with specific focus on a set of three interviews I carried out in establishing the methodology of our evaluation program. The transcripts of these interviews are included in Appendix 3. The second stream of the narrative is my own experience of leader training. The third stream is my experience as a manager who undertook leader training.

This chapter is descriptive and is intended to provide the reader with some sense of my experience during the period being considered. By choosing a critical and analytical autoethnographic approach I have chosen a style of writing that is less expressive than other forms of autoethnography and possibly less satisfying as an aesthetic appreciation of experience. While this chapter is largely descriptive it does include some preliminary and possibly superficial interpretation which is expanded and deepened in Chapter 6.

### ***Leader training***

I was part of the management team of a business that had planned to grow and had been successful in implementing that plan. In retrospect an obvious effect of growth was an increased span of management and a more complex organisation to manage. At the same time the organisation had been involved in a number of large alliance projects which brought together project specific management teams and rapidly established effective project operations. These projects generally used a 'facilitator' to establish a collaborative and effective team culture. Based on the success of this approach we theorized that tasks such as raising the capability of our office teams or merging companies would benefit from the same or a similar approach. One group of consultants that had facilitated alliance team formation also ran a series of leadership and corporate performance

improvement programs. After some consideration we opted to use the courses and services provided by this consultant.

Initially I wrote about our training as 'leadership' training. I have now adopted the distinction drawn by Carroll and Simpson (2012, p. 1284) between developing leaders and developing leadership. I make this distinction to make clear that while our objective was a 'leadership culture' the training we used was leader training. So while for example one of the interviewees, George, talks about his personal development as a leader, from my experience of working with George and the other trainees I can also identify how the practices they adopted contributed to how people in the organisation related to each other and how that in turn changed the way they acted. In terms of Carroll and Simpson's distinction, our method was about developing leaders but our intention was to develop 'leadership' as a characteristic of the organisation.

It became clear early in our program that the training we had chosen was different to other courses with which we were familiar. First, it introduced a novel way of talking about organisational life. Second, it challenged people individually to change themselves. People that completed the course spoke about personal epiphanies that ranged from being liberated to being disturbed. It was also clear that there were a range of responses from the participants in the program, from support and advocacy to opposition and aggressive resistance.

People who were familiar with The Landmark Forum (Landmark Education 2012) commented on the similarity of the training approaches. When asked about the connection, the Consultant disclosed that there was an historical link through a common antecedent program. It didn't take too much research to find that the Landmark Education approach has generated substantial controversy. In fact the Landmark Forum continues to generate controversy (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2011). An internet search of the term 'Landmark Forum' using the Google search engine on 24 December 2012 resulted in the following among the top eight related searches: landmark

forum scam, landmark forum cult pictures, landmark forum brainwashing, landmark forum cult, landmark rackets, and landmark forum complaints.

The similarity between our consultant's approach and the Landmark Forum raised ethical questions such as the degree to which the criticisms of the Landmark Forum were justified and the extent to which the same criticisms applied to the Consultant's programs. I've included a description of the common history and approaches of the programs in Appendix 2. Although we were aware of the personal challenge presented by the training we were unaware of the connection between the Consultant's training and the Landmark Forum when we commenced our program. By the time I had undertaken a detailed review of the history of the Consultant's program we had trained around fifty people with mostly positive accounts of participants' experience. Understanding the personal impact of the training was one motivation for evaluating the program.

We had also adopted a selection approach where people were able to apply to do the course and were asked to justify their inclusion. We encouraged those applying for the training to talk to people who had already completed the course. We relied on peoples' ability to make their own decisions, but in retrospect we were not aware of the extent to which organisational and peer pressure might influence their choice.

Demand for the training always exceeded places available, partly because the accounts of people who had done the training were generally positive and encouraging. However, it was probably the case that undertaking a 'leadership' program was seen as a career opportunity while choosing not to do the training could be interpreted as a statement of not wanting to be a 'leader'. So there was potential for a disparity between the choice to do the course and a perceived negative statement about career aspirations. It was also the case that the Managing Director's public advocacy for the course would have been a strong motivator for some.

### ***Planning for evaluation***

In 2008 I set out to evaluate the results of our 'leadership' program in terms of our overall aim to create a 'culture of leadership'. It was part of my role to assess the broader aspects of our performance as an organisation, especially as we continued to grow. We planned more growth and believed that we needed to help managers develop their capability to cope with the challenges of growth and change. The idea of a 'leadership culture' was not a goal or objective that was stated in our plans. Rather it was a belief that if we trained a critical number of managers as leaders we would encourage behaviours throughout the business that would ameliorate the negative effects of growth.

My plan for evaluation of the success or otherwise of our intention was to interview all the people who completed the course in terms of what they had learned and what experiences they had encountered in using their new capabilities in their work.

I had worked in the area of program evaluation in the context of reviewing intergovernmental assistance programs. I had also worked extensively on the design and implementation of this type of project. Working with my then research supervisor I summarized my view of how an interpretive approach to design could be applied instead of the dominant rational approach (Simpson & Gill 2007), and later extended this to a broader description of more general social change (Simpson & Gill 2008). On the basis of what I had learned I wanted to use a conversational form of inquiry and initially trialed this in three interviews with senior managers who had completed training. I used the experience gained during these interviews to train a member of my team who then used the approach to interview another 35 training participants.

While the evaluation work was being carried out I was also involved in the development of another program intended to integrate the multiple organisational cultures that coexisted in our organisation as a result of the extent and scale of our acquisitions. At the beginning of this program in 2008 we carried out a company-wide survey. We carried out another

company-wide survey in 2011 which was implemented by a company specializing in 'engagement' surveys. Both surveys consisted predominantly of multiple choice questions but included an opportunity in some questions for people to provide opinions on what the company could do better. I read through these comments several times during our evaluation of the leader development program to provide an alternative description of the organisational experience of people who were not involved in leader training.

I was also deeply involved in the acquisitions that increased the size and geographic spread of the Company. A major part of the company's growth was due to acquisition and through my involvement in due diligence processes and integration activities I interviewed many people who became senior managers in our company. For a number of the larger acquisitions I undertook operational due diligence and wrote the operational due diligence reports that included description of organisational culture and integration issues. Through this work, I developed a comprehensive view of acquired company origins and history and the differences between the cultures of the acquired companies. This deep involvement in the acquired businesses also provided a unique perspective of how people in the acquired business looked at the acquiring business.

All of this work has provided me with a comprehensive set of documents and experiences. Having shifted my own theoretical position from a positivist to an interpretivist perspective through my research, I recognize that the epistemology underpinning most management work in the company was positivist. Within the surveys and in most of our other management inquiries there was always a strong assumption we would learn 'facts' and as a result know something more than we knew before about the organisation. In framing this narrative I make no similar epistemic claim.

### ***Evaluating the program***

We decided to interview all those who had undertaken training who remained with the company. From a number of prior conversations I had heard that different people had responded differently to the training and that one of the

main concerns of the people involved was how well they had adapted their new skills for use in their workplace.

The preliminary interviews of three participants were intended to run for about 30 minutes and to be free flowing to allow for differences in the participants' experience and storytelling style. The interviews were structured around three question themes. The first question theme was about what the interviewees recalled as having been learned from the course and what the training experience was like for them. The second question theme was about how the interviewees had used what they had learned. The third question theme was about the constraints they had faced in returning from training into their work teams. The interviews were recorded and transcribed (Appendix 3). I discussed these interviews with my academic supervisor and we drew from the interviews some key themes.

As mentioned previously, I then trained a member of my team in the interview technique. I decided not to carry out the interviews myself because of my position in the organisation which for some of the interviewees may have created a barrier to openness and so influence the responses provided.

The interviewer spoke to the participants by telephone and responses were captured in extensive notes. The interviews were designed to encourage the interviewee to talk freely with very limited active prompting from the researcher. There were only five questions and each interview generally ran for about 30 minutes. Three key questions were asked along the following lines but a strict script was not enforced. We asked 'what did you learn from the training?'; 'how have you applied what you learned in your daily work?'; and 'when applying what you learned, what difficulties have you encountered?'.

Two other questions asked about the participants' willingness to be involved in training of other staff, and for any further comments. The question about involvement in future training was about possible future mentoring and in-house leadership development activities. The final open ended question provided for any other comments but also allowed for any return by the

interviewee to previous discussion that might be trigger additional thought. These final comments were examined for any extensions to the previous answers. Themes were extracted from the responses and a summary of the themes were presented to the management team as a slide presentation. The results were also presented to the consultant who provided the training.

### ***My experience of talking about leadership***

Talking about 'leadership' became a large part of my working life. Apart from the time involved in the preliminary interviews and training my interviewer, I have spent many hours reading the transcripts. I have also spent many hours organizing my thoughts and writing about the responses to our questions. In what follows I will draw out what these conversations have meant to me as an experience and how I have come to think about them.

In doing this I will draw primarily on the initial three interviews with George, John and Paul (not their real names). These are the interviews I transcribed and read many times. In transcribing them I tried to stay as close as possible to the way they spoke, with the pauses and repetitions and 'ums' and 'ahs' of how we speak. It's not until I did this that I understood the divergence between the written and spoken forms of language. We are flooded with scripted spoken performances through theatre, film and television and these are not at all like the transcripts of my interviews. When I listened to those interviews and read the transcripts I realised that the performance of speech is not smooth even though it seems that way when we are speaking. In the transcripts it appears sometimes as a tortured process of drawing from deep inside us, while at other times it flows almost as we would imagine it to flow. It is indeed a performance, but a performance where we are both scriptwriter and performer almost simultaneously.

In examining my experience of talking about 'leadership' I also had the advantage of continuing to work with many of the people who were interviewed. Even during this time I was re-reading the interviews while working alongside the people we had interviewed. So talking about

'leadership' was enhanced by illustration through observation of how what they told me was put into action. I could see how the people trained as leaders changed the way they worked and the impact of these changes on those around them. This was further reinforced during the period when I went through leader training while reading about others' experiences and seeing them putting their learning into action.

In the initial interviews and in conflating what George, John and Paul told me with my observations of how they acted and my conclusions about how these actions related to what they said they had learned, I acknowledge that I am creating my own story of what happened. It is this story of my experience that I want to analyze. The story as I tell it is intertwined with the theoretical and empirical literature I was reading while undertaking the evaluation work. For example, I don't want to lose sight of the fact that at the beginning of my work I had no appreciation of what the concept 'relational leadership' might be, but now I recognize that what we aspired to in a 'leadership culture' is similar to what others refer to as relational leadership

After the initial interviews, I used the transcripts of my conversations with George, John and Paul to identify units of meaning which I organized into three key themes. I also recognized two additional themes which, while apparent, were not as strongly emphasized as the three dominant themes. As a way of reflecting on my experience of talking about leadership I will spend some time revisiting my work in identifying those themes and how I can compare my observations then with my subsequent experience.

### ***Trainees talking about their selfness***

A strong theme that came through the interviews was the centrality of improvements to "self". John believed that the concepts introduced through the course led to the improvement of both himself as well as the company. He provided an example of how his leader training had made it possible to negotiate a significant contract without relying on more senior people. Although the process was extremely stressful, he had to push himself through this discomfort in order to achieve the desired outcome. He felt this

was something he would not have been able to do if he hadn't done the course.

George thought that something he had learned was that leadership is about owning up to the responsibility to make changes – changes to oneself especially – and through that to influence other people. For George, this requires a lot of reflection on what one does on a daily basis and how this impacts on other people. This realisation was quite liberating; he realised that he does not need anyone's approval to become the person that he wants to become. Effectively, he shifted his 'locus of control' to a more internal position.

For Paul, an important realisation gained from his experience of leadership was that in clinging to the past we may be demonstrating a fear of the future; a fear of our own and others' potential not being sufficient to the demands of the future.

For John, self is an important aspect of leadership success. He saw that those who had excelled in applying the knowledge gained from the course had done this by maintaining a positive orientation to everything and a strong sense of self-belief. This in turn creates a positive environment which encourages others to believe in themselves and to be positive about the task. As a consequence of this positive form of 'being', others are encouraged to approach even the difficult and distasteful tasks with commitment and enthusiasm;

George also identified self as a component of successfully learning to lead. He realised that leadership was not just for the privileged few; that anyone could become a good leader through working on themselves and taking feedback on how they were progressing. The process of learning to take feedback was the most challenging and useful exercise in the program, and entailed learning to take feedback from others without questioning or challenging it. What changed him in terms of his new readiness to accept feedback (as critique) from others was that he realised that this was the only way that he was going to know what he needed to do to improve himself. It

helped him to see other respected people taking feedback without defending themselves against it. This provided a benchmark for him. Watching others being big enough to accept critical feedback and change because of it strongly influenced him to be more open to critique from others.

Conflicting feedback made George aware that he behaved in different ways with different people and in different situations. He realised that some feedback was oriented to typical behaviour that he exhibited across various situations and other feedback was more relevant to specific situations.

While George identified critical feedback as an important element of improving self, Paul spoke at length about understanding others' interpretations as different to one's own. Paul realised that the perception that he had in relation to leadership issues was based upon his interpretation of a situation and that there were alternative interpretations of these situations. This introduced him, via a discussion with one of the facilitators, to the concept of 'your past being a cage'. If you let your past inform your future, in some cases this can be restrictive. This concept shed light on a conflict he was having with his manager at the time – both of them were butting heads and not making progress in resolving the issue – and after discussing it in the program he realised that he needed a different interpretation of the conflict. This helped him to see that his manager needed information that Paul regarded as superfluous. His attitude had been 'in the past this was not needed so why does he need it now?' but, upon interpreting the situation differently, this barrier was overcome through empathy; through stepping into his manager's shoes and interpreting the situation from his perspective. His manager was looking at the situation from an analytical perspective. When Paul adopted the same perspective he understood the needs of his manager. Through this experience he gained a valuable tool in trying to understand the interpretation of a situation by others and the needs that influence that interpretation. He learned that in order to be a leader he had to change his approach and his attitude.

George talked at length about the importance of how the program made him more reflective and analytical in terms of the impact of his actions and

behaviour on other people. It encouraged him to take a completely different attitude towards some people with whom he had been in deep conflict. While he thinks that his new behaviour is still inconsistent, compliments from others about how he has changed have encouraged him to continue to reflect on his behaviour in this way. His reflection on his relationship with others has enabled him to take a different attitude towards them. This is something he tries to do now especially when he has a very negative view of another person. An example was a conference call in which he made a conscious effort to think positively about someone he had developed negative feeling towards. This resulted in a much better conversation between them.

George sees the risks in not being reflective. He believes that if you do not think about the nature of the conversation that you are going to have with someone, you can be led into another kind of, less useful, conversation. He observed that in business, because people are busy, or on a good run, they tend not to reflect in the required way. George also believes that reflecting on the nature of conversations – especially after these conversations were completed – has improved his ‘listening’. While he concedes that his listening probably hasn’t improved in real time but it has improved in terms of the value that pre- and post-conversation reflection has created.

Paul sees that leaders provide leadership through the values they hold. He thought that the leaders around him were not acting according to the Company’s core values, and he sees examples of such behaviour at all levels of the organisation. He believes that everything starts with leadership and that leaders’ example and consistency with respect to values and behaviour sets the benchmark for everyone else in the organisation.

Immediately after the course, George doubted that he had changed. He met some constraints to applying his learning from the course into practice after he went back to work. He found differences in the way other colleagues did and did not apply the core messages from the program. Some of the subsequent meetings of those who undertook training were somewhat artificial. Some of them exhibited exemplary behaviour in being able to take critical feedback. Others put in a lot of time in mentoring their staff more

effectively. A lot of them did not take the 'course deliverables' seriously. However, George felt that the biggest constraint was himself, and this was something that kept popping up in the course – that you are the source of most of your problems. The worst part for him was the feeling that his actions on returning to the organisation were not sufficient to justify the investment in time and money that the course had cost. Although he eventually received positive feedback on changes he has made, this came later than was needed. He needed his confidence with respect to the value of the new approach boosted immediately on returning to the organisation. This did not happen and he struggled to sustain his efforts to transform his behaviour.

### ***Relatedness***

George felt that his relationships with those around him at work created an obligation to lead. He learned that he could be a leader and should be a leader. This had not crossed his mind before. He realised that part of his role responsibility was to be a leader and to work at becoming a better leader.

In a similar vein, Paul saw one aspect of leadership as helping people to see the implications of their role. Examples of good leadership that he has recently seen are around quietly getting people to see the implications of a situation for their role and their future; and managing conflict at the senior management level. Taking in understanding of being able to see things from other viewpoints, he thinks conflicting parties should be challenged to see their issues from the other's perspective, understanding what exactly they wanted and why; and helping the parties to come to an informed decision on the situation reasonably quickly rather than imposing a decision on them.

John felt that others who had attended the course had transformed their leadership style. An example of this is an individual who now recognizes when he is out of his depth and works with others to reach consensus on the best way forward. Another positive outcome of the course was greater collaboration across Business Units.

Paul mentioned the importance to leadership of understanding where people are coming from. For Paul, the necessary skill set includes being more

understanding of where other people are coming from and then articulating a path to achievement of their objectives. The path must be one that they can understand and relate to. It's about being able to inspire and influence others; about being consistent and secure in who you are and not, through fear of being inadequate, trying to be someone else. It's the ability to work through others to achieve an outcome and to continue to develop capacity in others so as to make yourself redundant.

Paul also believed that working collaboratively was both an outcome of the course and an important part of being a leader. The course brought together a mix of people from different industries as well as a group of his colleagues, and this helped him gain new insights and understanding with respect to these people. It also provided an opportunity to establish relationships with people that would not have been possible in a normal working context.

### ***Language creates relations***

Language was an essential part of the leader training, and it is seen as a critical element of successful 'leadership'. Not surprisingly the three interviews all mentioned aspects of language, including specific comments about communication, conversations, and declarations.

John believes he has learned to listen effectively; to gain understanding of issues; to stand back and contemplate them; and then create a new 'clearing'. He believes that to create conversations that explore possibilities one has to stop others jumping to conclusions. It is important to ensure that all options are explored and that all ideas are voiced.

For George, a basic premise of the course – that leading is about the quality of conversations one has with others – was very new and difficult to grasp at first. As a consequence, now he decides before meetings – and challenges other participants to do the same – what sort of conversation they will have in the meeting. He also thinks about the type of conversation he is going to have with individuals he may be meeting and this has made these meetings much more constructive and productive (he has received compliments on this). George mentioned that the ideal situation is to have a conversation

when you are ready for it but this is not always possible; some conversations have to be had in the moment. He was open in admitting that he is not good at those impromptu conversations. However, he thinks that if you get into the wrong conversation, you must accept responsibility for it, apologise and attempt to transform the conversation accordingly. If that is not possible, he has learned to reflect on the failed conversation, take the lessons from it, and go back to the parties to re-initiate another type of conversation.

John mentioned that “really” listening to others and understanding the ‘background conversations’ of those around the table helped him to focus on the task. The course has taught him to analyze a situation; to determine the course of new action that needs to be taken; declaring the intended outcomes and sharing them with the other stakeholders; and then driving the outcome by being on-the-ball and responsive all the time.

### ***Performance through talking***

The benefits of learning to have effective conversations flowed through to success in both business and family life for George. While it was his personal doggedness that sustained him at first, it was evidence of success that secured his achievements. These successes include his children saying to him that he has changed – that they can have a difficult conversation with him without him losing his temper. He also began to get much better at listening to others which helped him realise that he has probably contributed to creating many of the problems that he has had to deal with at work and at home.

For John the immediate benefits of the course were reflected in getting back on budget after falling far behind at one stage. It also provided new professional goals, including development of new leadership within business units reporting to him; achieving business targets each year in spite of the economic situation; and to stay personally involved in major projects and achieve extraordinary results through them.

For Paul achievement was about coming into a role in which he could easily enact the new philosophy he had gained. The initial constraints were to do

with his understanding of the role, of having to create a new business with no authority, resources or budget, and facing many barriers to success. However, after some coaching, he reinterpreted the role as an opportunity to lead as oppose to manage. The coaching helped by challenging him to get down to the fundamentals of the issues; to identify what it was that he really needed to get the job done and to reinterpret what the barriers actually were. For example, instead of interpreting the role as one without authority, he needed to realise the powerful influence that could be exercised from the role and, through this capacity to influence, demonstrate 'leadership' to get results. So the change in mind-set was from one in which it is assumed that authority is delegated by others from above, to the assumption that authority is exercised through influencing others (above and below you). It is really the transformation of assumptions about authority as something that is delegated to one by others, to assumptions of authority as the personal ability to influence a situation (get things done, access resources, etc.).

Paul's leadership training helped him to create a clearer distinction between managing and leading. In some ways they require a complementary but different skill-set which creates a space for others to manage and lead. In the past, if there was a problem he would have jumped in and fixed it and not created the space for others to learn from the experience of addressing the problem.

### ***Barriers***

Only John spoke about barriers to implementation although George mentioned the lack of immediate feedback as a personal barrier. For John, organisational barriers to implementing knowledge gained from the course are primarily created by others who have done the course but are not living it. They are not 'living it' by allowing themselves to get into loops which contradict the course message of 'generate – don't wait'. As a consequence these loops lead to no decisions being made and, thus, inhibited action which slows the processes down to a halt. This behaviour frustrates those who are trying to apply the course teachings.

### ***My experience of leader training***

The course I attended was not exactly the same as the course that the people I spoke to attended. It was presented as a leadership team building exercise. The content and language was similar to the courses undertaken by our managers, but presented in the context of a leadership team working together on seemingly intractable problems. The course took place as two four-day sessions.

The specific purpose of the course was to train a leadership team to create a high performing organisation. In broad terms this addressed matters such as team alignment, clarity of individual expectations, how we and the business could see ourselves as a unified team, and the development of a shared vocabulary and approach for leadership. The course content covered aspects of learning theory, of listening and talking, building a performance culture, and accountability. Theory was presented as a scaffold within which we were presented with personal and team challenges. The challenges took the form of a set of specific practices to be incorporated into our way of acting, a personal project as an intervention into a problem we individually had encountered, and a set of team projects aimed at resolving shared problems we had identified. In addition, throughout the sessions we were individually challenged to critically examine our assumptions and assertions and to challenge ourselves and our team to perform beyond expectations.

### ***The experience of learning***

Having spent a considerable amount of time researching leadership and talking to people who had undertaken similar training, the experience of the training was both familiar and unfamiliar. I felt that it was familiar at an intellectual level; the language and terminology was the same as the language that had already been introduced to the organisation by people who had undertaken similar leadership training. But being part of the training course was unfamiliar. I felt challenged and maybe even threatened by the experience, of having to justify each statement and the subsequent surfacing of hidden biases and prejudices through the method used by the course facilitators.

Being part of a learning environment under pressure was both exhilarating and exhausting. As a reading we were given an article entitled “the Making of a Corporate Athlete” (Loehr & Schwartz 2001). I gathered from this that one aspect of being a leader in a high performance organisation is the energy level needed to sustain high performance. I also learned that being a leader is a performance analogous to a sporting performance. The effort to become and be a leader involves physical exertion as well as intellectual and emotional development. Leaders’ practices are performed by the body and require energy to be sustained. The practices we were encouraged to adopt included actions in the areas of communication, authenticity, committed talking, active listening, asking for and giving feedback, dealing with complaints, and holding one’s self and others to account.

We were given a list of practices from which we had to pick one and commit to it. While the list of practices is quite short, there are many opportunities to exercise any one of the suggested practices on a daily basis. An example of one such practice is dealing with a complaint I might have with something another person is doing, a theme I used in writing Story 5 in Chapter 4. The complaint starts with a feeling of dissatisfaction and to turn this feeling into an action I need to transform the complaint into a request for the other person to do something specific. There is an underlying assumption that I have examined my own performance and convinced myself that I am not causing the problem. If I am not causing the problem and I want to act as a leader, I must take action to resolve the issue and this action involves negotiating an outcome in which the other person accepts the situation as I see it and agrees to change what they are doing. To do this I need the courage to overcome all the normal anxieties associated with taking a stand, such as ‘I don’t want to be proved wrong’ and ‘I don’t want you to be angry or sad’. In a simple case where a small change is required my request could be put simply as: ‘I request you to do something by a certain time’.

Often my complaint may be about how a person is being. In this case I have to first deal with the possibility that the other person may be unaware of how they are being or why this would be a problem for me. So before a request

can be made, a conversation about how I see the other person's way of being may be required. My complaint now requires a conversation about how I am experiencing the other and how that makes me feel, how that's a problem for me, and how that can be resolved. Of course, a real conversation opens up the possibility that both parties to the conversation will learn and adapt as a shared view emerges. The opportunity to create these possibilities happens every day; dealing with dissatisfaction and complaints was just one of the leader practices discussed.

Looking at leading as a set of practices at the individual level presents a myriad of opportunities for leaders to act. Learning to respond to these opportunities seems to require: awareness of the possibility of action; handling the emotional impact of action; and maintaining sufficient energy to act as needed. The human demands of the frequency and constancy of possibilities for leading should not be discounted. Until learned practices become habituated they will be energy sapping because of the high emotional load of acting with courage. At the same time habituated action needs to be examined and open to reflexive adjustment. It might seem that the more habituated our actions are the less energy they require, but habituated action that results in anxiety also absorbs energy. Reflexive examination will also require effort but it may also lead to removal of anxiety and lessening of the energy demands of habituated action. Whatever way we look at it, the effort of changing one's self and changing others requires effort and energy.

### ***Integrity presented as a context for action***

The course I attended included a new component that was not in the training provided to the people I interviewed. The idea of integrity as an element of organisational performance was introduced (Erhard, Jensen & Zaffron 2009). I had already read about this concept so I was more prepared for this discussion than the others in the training. The definition was presented as a positive (as opposed to normative) concept. It became clear in discussion that this is a difficult concept to grasp, because the idea of 'integrity' in common use is linked to ideas such as honesty and ethics which are

normative concepts. While a positive definition is intrinsically positivist, it provides value in my discussion by presenting a model of a complex set of relations and obligations that emerge for individuals in a socially constructed reality.

Breaking down the practice of integrity to its base level, it is 'doing what one says one will do'. Of course, situations change and sometimes we are prevented from doing what we said we would do, and in those cases we need to inform anyone who might be affected as soon as possible that we can't do what we said we would do. Left at this level, this is still an exact and demanding practice. Being clear about what was intended involves good communication practices without which misunderstandings will unintentionally undermine integrity. Having the courage to admit a failure in delivering what was promised, and also committing to the standard of timeliness demanded, are also significant challenges for those starting to learn integrity as a behaviour. Again, there is anxiety attached to admitting a mistake or failure and courage required to act in the face of anxiety.

Beyond the simple and immediate levels of integrity are a series of less direct but no less important implied promises. These promises are implied by acceptance of the social norms, by choosing to be part of an organisation with rules, and by continuing to live within a jurisdiction and its legal context. Within this web of norms, including social obligations and laws, our integrity is always being challenged. For example, if I consistently drive my car at speeds exceeding the legal speed limit, am I willing for the sake of integrity to publicly state that I will not obey the law and to take a stand on my right to exceed the speed limit? If I choose to be part of an organisation, am I willing to accept the way things are done or will I take a visible stand against the things with which I disagree and also accept the consequences of my actions which may include dismissal?

On reflection, I see that these questions became a central test for both leaders and their followers. The dual challenge of accepting accountability for what we say, or being clear about what we expect, and of appreciating the complexity of our context, all seems to be important to the concept of

leading. But this is not an idea that relates solely to the context of leading or following. It also seems to fit with the idea of being a good person in society or a good member of an organisation.

If we have integrity and we choose to continue to be a particular way or remain in any particular context, we are accepting that way of being or that context as better than any other feasible alternative, in a practical sense. At various times I have experienced the conflict between the interests of the organisation and my own personal interests, and I have also been with people who are struggling with this type of conflict. I have seen leaders in an organisation struggle to commit to a decision made by their supervisor or by a group of their peers. I have seen leaders struggle with a commitment to consensus when the team they led was split between two possible courses of action. In such circumstances the choices available are to not take a stand, or to take a stand and publicly state it, or to take a stand and remain silent. On more than one occasion I know that people have left a meeting with no intention of implementing one or more of the meeting's decisions. In some cases that person may have had the integrity to declare their stand. On many occasions this was not the case.

My experience of involvement in leader training was both emotionally and intellectually challenging. The example of the new definition of integrity revealed the complexity of obligations and commitments we make by choosing to be part of an organisation and the impossibility of attaining full integrity under this definition. The emotional impact of conflicting obligations is substantial and any amount of analysis seems inevitably to create unresolvable dilemmas and paradoxes resulting in anxiety about choices and performance. This is consistent with the view of Ford and Harding that we are dealing with a "rich, complex value-laden territory which involves concepts such as trust, honesty, legitimacy, authority and authenticity" (Ford & Harding 2007, p. 144). In this interpretation, leadership is "not a set of qualities that an individual either has or does not have, but is rather a profoundly social experience that involves processes of mutual recognition between those engaged in working out how to go on together" (ibid).

### ***My experience of practicing as a leader***

I have now written about my experience of talking about 'leadership' and my experience of being trained as a leader. In this section I want to describe some of my experiences of practicing as a leader. I have worked in supervisory and management roles now for over 30 years. In my current role I have no direct reports and no immediate people management responsibilities. In this role the requirement to be a leader is the strongest of any role that I have played.

In my role as a senior manager I have been involved in many activities that have had significant change impact on the organisation within which I worked, and in some cases in organisations for which I was a consultant. This has included acquisitions and integration, change programs, business performance reviews, and business re-scaling and re-structuring. All of these activities have involved programs of substantial organisational change at significant scales. In various roles and at various times I have led teams of people to achieve corporate objectives. From this work I have had many opportunities to observe people working through difficult decisions and making difficult changes, often in cases where they had to choose between their own interests and the interests of the organisation. I have seen people make significant commitments of time and effort at emotional cost to themselves.

I can think of many examples of when I've seen the highly emotional side of making commitments. It is a very human process despite the fact that many of our commitments are towards institutional goals. I can only interpret the emotional impact of the commitments of others through reflection on my own commitments and how those commitments impacted me emotionally.

Commitment is something that happens at the micro level within organisations. One of the practices taught during our leader training was 'committed talking'. This includes making declarations, promises, requests and offers. It also involves being able to recognize when conversations for understanding need to turn to conversations for action. And in some circumstances it is necessary to muster the confidence and courage to take

a stand, turning the conversation to a declaration of what one stands for. Practicing 'committed talking' is a significant challenge and one that occurs regularly. For example, if we sit around a table and make a decision that will cause anxiety about change, the decision itself is made in full realisation of the future conversation with the people impacted. There will be a time for committed talking where we declare a position in the face of the anxiety created by that position. On any day in any organisation people are meeting and talking about the future. My own experience in being part of such conversations, especially having spent so much time talking and studying practices of leading, is that people are regularly expected to commit themselves implicitly many times each day, both to specific actions and ways of being, and this is rarely recognized or understood by the people who are asking for commitment and those who are committing. Making commitments explicit is a technique for leaders looking to clarify expectations.

Leading with integrity requires that in all future conversations we take responsibility for the part we played in our declarations, commitments and decisions. Alternatively, if we don't want to be part of a decision we need to act with integrity by stating our opposition to the decision. For an organisation to continue as an effective unit, if a team makes a decision everyone who was party to that decision is bound to act in support of that decision irrespective of whether they supported the decision before it was made. When people do not act in support of higher level decisions, the organisation breaks into smaller disconnected parts. When I step back from the immediacy of business conversations I can consider the possibility that the organisation is being both constructed and demolished simultaneously in myriad conversations each day across the organisation. Through my experience of how decisions are made in organisations I can imagine the multitude on conversations happening simultaneously that create the reality of the organisation as it is at any given moment.

It is rare that someone explicitly asks 'to what is our commitment directed?'. As part of an organisation, when I ask myself this question the first and obvious answer is 'to the business'. But the answer is more complex. First, I

think there is the immediate self-interest in being part of a healthy and growing business as a good provider of future employment. Direct self-interest is involved in commitment to future career, as in 'if I perform well in this situation I will enhance my career prospects'. But in deteriorating business environments, when costs must be reduced, positions removed from the organisational structure, and parts of the business sold, these commitments don't hold up well against the human or emotional cost.

In the face of difficult decisions and high emotional cost, the predicate of committing becomes important. The practice of committed talking can only be exercised with integrity if it is clear to who or what the commitment is directed. In the past I've found myself appealing to some form of 'greater organisational good' in describing why someone's self-interest needed to be secondary to an organisational objective. What I'm describing here is a constant source of organisational anxiety: how do I act with integrity as a leader when the organisational rules are socially constructed and subject to change? When do I accept the organisational rules as a background for my actions and when do I make them the object of my action?

Another generalized example of my experience of leading is in the conduct of meetings, and I used some stories of meetings and workshops in my critical incident descriptions of Chapter 4. Meetings provide an immediate example of purpose and the possibility of influencing others toward that purpose. The generation of a structured conversation to step through possibilities, resolve differences and decide on action requires a leader with the skills to help others through this process.

A meeting is led when the conversation is directed towards the meeting's purpose. If the meeting is chaired, the role of the chair may be to shape the conversation to its purpose. Without a chair, the meeting leadership is open to whoever wants to take it. It is not surprising that without a specific purpose and without a nominated chair, the purpose of the meeting is more often than not revealed in the type of conversations rather than the type of conversation being determined by the purpose of a meeting.

Meetings are a central element of organisational discourse. Reflecting on many meetings, I have observed that much of the talk at meetings is about individuals' 'need to be heard' and so tends to serve individual purposes rather than the individuals serving the meeting purpose. Many meetings are fragmented and many individual contributions do not seem to be connected to the purpose of the meeting. Being heard seems to be an important social and psychological process. However, sometimes meetings also have an explicit purpose, either to share understanding or to make decisions. Meetings of various sizes and shapes are also the forums in which the opportunity occurs for leaders to influence related individuals.

In my experience of leading an aspect on which I have focused is the communicative action necessary to create future actions. For me every meeting is an opportunity to create something. The practices of active listening and committed talking are important individual practices but within the context of a meeting they combine to create a discourse. This discourse is complex; it is a confluence of individual viewpoints and individual attempts to influence change as understanding immanent in the discourse develops. As a leader, taking meetings seriously requires developing plans and structures for discussion that fit the meeting purpose. In some cases meetings are exploratory and the structure needs to be open ended and conducive to discovery and creation. Other meetings are intended to decide on action or to resolve an issue. In these cases the preparation requires more formal presentation of information and more care in ensuring that each viewpoint had been heard and participants commit to the decisions and actions.

On reflection and over time I have come to see leading as a shared function exercised through the communicative exchanges of formal meetings and informal conversations. Stepping back, I see organisations as networks of conversations, informal and formal. Leaders in an organisation influence conversations and together these conversations construct the organisation's future. I have been in conversations that I can look back on and connect to the way we are now. Ironically, there is rarely a sense at the time of the

meeting of how a particular conversation will construct the future, and rarely a glimpse of what that future might look like. People involved in social construction rarely envisaged the future they are creating. Maybe if there were a sense that each conversation was creating the future organisation the weight of expectation would crush the conversation. The future created would be different to the future envisaged.

Despite the central importance of meetings in creating organisation, I have experienced continued and pervasive negative attitudes towards meetings expressed as 'let's stop talking and start acting'. When I experience this attitude, I reflect on the understanding of participants of the purpose of the meetings they attend and the contribution of those meetings to the overall direction of the organisation.

Putting together the idea of purposefulness and the idea that explicit purpose could crush important meetings, leaders need to be accountable for resurfacing purpose in their conversations and meetings while also accepting responsibility for bearing the weight of expectations. From time to time, purpose needs to be re-surfaced to re-establish a shared understanding of how each conversation is contributing to the mutual task of creating an organisational future.

### ***Adoption of personal practices***

Using the mirror of feedback has been an important practice for me. I have learned to use simple checks to ensure that I am taking feedback. A simple example is self-regulating the use of the word 'but' as the first word of response to something someone has said. The feedback of this practice is often presented as an argument that was not intended. This is part of a simple recognition that as well as what we say the way we speak creates our future circumstances. It is supported by the recognition that habits, such as starting every response with 'but', create the person we appear to be for others, a person who is disputing a fact and looking for an argument.

### ***Constraints to leadership***

Like other participants of training, I found that the major constraint to learning was my own ability to sustain the practices. Bringing new practices back into an organisation set one apart from the “way things are done around here”. As a leader in a position of authority it is reasonable to expect people to follow instructions. However, changes that involve people adopting new practices and changing behaviour are problematic. Directions that conflict with deeply held values will cause anxiety and conflict. I discovered that introducing new leadership practices also challenged some people’s sense of fairness, solidarity and compassion. Setting a standard of performance that was consistent with a high performance organisation created conflicts with those who were unable to perform to that standard as well as those that felt that team loyalty was a more important value than team performance.

Similar issues arose between peers in teams. Again language is constitutive of interests and conflict is a result of individual interests set against organisational outcomes. The constraints to operation of the leader practices occurred when individual interests were assumed to be group interests. I found it useful to ask people who they included in the term ‘we’. Simple critical assessment of the use of ‘we’ often revealed that people were speaking for their own interests, which sometimes did and sometimes didn’t include their colleagues’ interests or their team’s interests. As an example, suppose you and I are working together in the same team, and each of us refer to ourselves as ‘we’. How do I know whether you are including me in your ‘we’? This simple lack of clarity makes the practice of integrity difficult because there is no clarity of who is promising what to whom. Or rather, there may be individual clarity but no shared clarity. It has occurred to me in some meetings that every participant had a different ‘we’ whose interests they were pursuing.

A similar issue is the issue of consultation. In a variation of the Story 4 in Chapter 3, I experienced a case where a meeting I attended broke down over the issue of consultation. Many people at the meeting assumed the meeting was about consultation prior to a decision when in fact the decision

had already been made at a different forum. The conversation quickly became heated and splintered off into a range of complaints about the conversation being manipulated. Finally someone in anger accused the senior person at the meeting of not listening to the views being presented. After a puzzled silence, the confusion became obvious and the leader committed to re-opening the process for discussion and committed to taking the results of the meetings back to the other decision making bodies. This was done with humility and respect and as a result by the end of the meeting there was general agreement not to change the decision that had already been made. The issue was clearly not the decision but the way the decision had been made and communicated. The social expectation of the group was that they would be involved in the decision. Integrity of the leader in this case required awareness of the social expectation within the meeting group. On the part of the leader, when he became aware of the social expectation he quickly made clear that he was prepared to act to maintain his integrity. On the part of the group, when they realised that they actually agreed with the original decision, and that their leader had acted to repair his integrity when faced with the facts of his failure, they were satisfied sufficiently to accept the original decision.

The description of the meeting above provides an example of a problem that could be easily avoided. In my experience many of the constraints to leading occur in this way, with a lack of clarity leading to a perceived breakdown in integrity and a perception of inauthenticity. The personal effort involved in communicative processes is continuous and unrelenting and any breakdown in that effort sows the seeds of dissatisfaction, dissent and conflict. The breakdown in integrity is interesting because it occurs when there is an expectation that things will be done a particular way, and this describes an essential social aspect of corporate culture. Where there is an expectation that consultation will occur before decisions are made, it is a social aspect of the culture of the group or organisation. For leaders to act with integrity they need to be aware that this expectation exists and if they disagree with the expectation they need to make that clear.

I have experienced similar expectations about consensus, compliance and the exercise of authority, and these have occurred to me to be key areas of confusion within organisations. Without constant efforts to create clarity ambiguity will occur and within this space of confusion opportunists become ad hoc leaders. So for example, if I want consensus at a meeting and fail as a leader to get consensus, I have opened up the possibility that another person may propose an alternative that might be more widely supported than my proposition. In a dynamic sense I am no longer the leader and in lieu of exercising positional authority (as in 'this is my decision and you will follow my direction') I have ceded real authority to the other. This exercise and transfer of power within organisations is ubiquitous and dynamic. When there is ambiguity between positional authority and authority-in-practice, who proposes the vision for the future? Who becomes the leader?

### ***A crisis of faith***

This chapter has presented my story of talking about 'leadership', being trained as a leader, and acting as a leader. All of this was during a time when I was researching 'leadership' and so 'leadership' became a central idea in my life. I didn't expect to end where I did, with the idea of 'leadership' disappearing like a mirage. After believing so strongly that something called 'leadership' existed and having invested as much as we did in training leaders and evaluating our attempt to build a 'leadership culture' it is an understatement to say I was surprised to find myself doubting the existence of 'leadership'. Despite this, I worked beside the people who had been trained and I recognized that they had changed and the way they worked had changed, although this wasn't true for everyone. Some of those who had struggled with some aspects of the training continued to struggle in their relationships with their managers and their staff. And the more I considered this the more I was drawn towards resolving my own crises of faith. The chapters that follow are my analysis and interpretation of where I have landed in resolving this crisis.

## ***Chapter 6 Reflections on researching leadership***

In Chapter 5 I provided a reflection on practicing as a leader. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on my experience of researching leadership by building from the narrative of my experience presented so far. I have again used Fook and Gardener's four analytical categories of reflection, reflexive analysis, deconstruction, and critical analysis as an analytical framework for the narrative. The chapter attempts to dig deeper into the assumptions underlying my approach to researching leadership to make clear how these assumptions led the research to certain conclusions.

### ***Reflection***

#### ***A fourth component of 'leadership'***

Leadership practices seem to be similar to those required to 'live a good life' or to 'be an effective person', which begs a question of how leadership is different to being a good and competent person. If we adopt the view that 'leadership' consists of a "leader or leaders, followers, and a common goal they want to achieve" (Bennis 2007, pp. 3-4) then the difference lies in the purpose pursued by the leader.

In a sense, being a good or effective person implies its own purpose: the goal of being a good or effective person. On the other hand, being a good leader doesn't only imply its own purpose because there is the additional implication of purpose in the idea of leading. Being a good leader is not a single purpose; there is also an implied purpose of leading toward a goal outside of our self. A purpose of being a good leader implies leading towards something; we can't escape the implied transitive sense of leading. We must be leading towards something.

I also suggested that in addition to Bennis's three components of 'leadership' there is also the idea of resistance. The purpose of leading must also be resisted for there to be a reason to lead. Resistance can be as mild as ignorance of the need to move or change or as strong as fear or extreme anxiety to change.

If we include resistance as a fourth component of 'leadership' we have three sets of pairs implicit in the idea of leading. The first way of pairing the four components are as leader and follower being the people involved and purpose and resistance being the intentional components. The second set of pairings links purpose as belonging to the leader and resistance belonging to the follower. The third set of pairings links purpose as facing the follower and resistance facing the leader.

Put another way, a leader is doing something with purpose and against resistance, while a follower is doing something with resistance and against purpose. The resolution of these 'for' and 'against' relations seems to be saying something about the work of leaders and may provide a useful critical analytical structure for looking at 'leadership'.

### ***Our shared belief in a 'leadership' culture***

When I reflect on the practices taught through our leader development courses they are focused on improving the skills of the individual. Day and Harrison (2007) discuss the evolution of the complexity and inclusiveness of leader development thinking from individual top-down influence on followers to a multi-level approach involving individuals, teams and whole organisations and the possibility of the emergence of 'leadership'. Day and Harrison's 'multi-level' approach argues that "effective leadership development rests on a foundation of sound leader development" but that "having well-developed leaders is insufficient for organisational success" (ibid p. 364). They point to identity (or self-concept) development as proceeding from individual to collective. At the individual level "leadership is something a person possesses and the leader is the source of leadership and the followers are the receivers" (ibid p. 367). At the relational level leadership can be seen "in terms of influencing a follower" (ibid p.367). At the collective level 'leadership' is "understood as happening when people participate in collaborative forms of thought and action" and 'leadership' is "a property of the social system and all entities within the given system" (ibid p.367). The development of 'leadership' within an organisation relies on individuals

moving from a personal self-concept to a self-concept that includes individual, relational, and collective levels (ibid p.361).

From my own experience the movement from individual to collective self-concept has happened over many years. Our desire to build a 'leadership culture' was about removing the individual and locally oriented perspectives that prevented company-wide perspectives. From an individualistic purpose of being a good leader and developing the practices to achieve that purpose, we aspired to a collective purpose of working together to develop a good organisation.

Reading Day and Harrison's account of a multi-level identity based approach to 'leadership' development makes clear the shift required from individual to collective self-concept. What starts as a personal project becomes social when we consider who decides on what being a 'good' organisation member is, to what extent our choice to be a good organisation member is our own choice, and to what extent the decision to be a good organisation member is also a decision to be a follower. At all levels our commitment to an organisational purpose is governed by our social and institutional obligations, but who determines those obligations?

My belief in leadership and my commitment to a 'leadership' culture seem to stem from a belief in what is good for the organisation, the possibility of improvement toward that which is good for the organisation, and the essentially social nature of organizing in pursuit of that purpose. The practices that I have observed as developmental of a leader's skills are practices I also associate with the skills of being socially effective as a person, which using Day and Harrison's terminology are the skills required of a relational self-concept. But they are still individual skills. To talk of 'leadership' as a characteristic of an organisation may lead us to obscure the individual work of leaders and followers in providing purpose and resisting purpose. My inclination is to see collective leadership as a characteristic of a group of people who have a more or less shared self-concept as an organisation. This self-concept is more or less shared in proportion to the strength with which purpose and resistance are opposed.

The conclusion is still the same as Day and Harrison's conclusion that more advanced forms of 'leadership' development would need to be implemented for teams at the relational level and for whole organisations at the collective level. Our shared belief in the need to move beyond individual leader development was exhibited in our desire to build a 'leadership' culture, and shows that we had developed a collective self-concept. When leaders returned from training they met resistance from others in the organisation in various forms. Resistance included collegiate groups that had developed their own self-identity that opposed the purpose of a broader company self-identity. Moving from Day and Harrison's team level to the organisational level is not as simple as defining the difference as relational and collective. In practical terms it means overcoming the resistance presented by barriers between 'us' and 'them' at multiple levels, from individual to team, from team to office, from office to region, from region, service line or function to company.

### ***Power in a 'leadership culture'***

When I asked people the question about constraints to leadership I was interested in the degree of resistance that people with new ideas and possibly a changed self-concept had when returning from leader development. While in many cases participants initially denied that there were constraints or problems in leading, in nearly all these cases the participant proceeded to describe one or more aspects that had impacted on their practice of leadership.

The dominant constraint reported was related to the personal problems associated with learning and implementing new skills which could be described as a problem of capability. These difficulties were sometimes reported as failures of habituation. In my own experience I reported the sense of not being able to maintain the energy required to practice approaches that had not been habituated. The discomfort of thinking and learning about self was also identified as part of the key themes of learning about leadership but it also surfaced as a constraint to implementation.

If the leadership training had been completely successful, each participant should be alert to and be able to eliminate their 'rackets', which can be interpreted as the complaints they are using to justify the way they are being. Despite this, many found aspects of their operating environment to 'blame' as constraints to practicing as a leader. The list of external factors to blame included the 'organisation' including its systems and culture, the external competitive environment, other people, other types of people, and different capabilities and moralities.

A specific example of blaming others occurred in the recognition that some who had been trained as leaders were not performing as leaders, and the related idea that it would be easier to lead if everyone else had been trained as a leader. An important observation was the common ability to recognize that others were not behaving as leaders while also stating that there were no problems in practicing as a leader.

A less but still quite common problem was the resolution of goal conflict. This was expressed as disagreement with organisational goals, an inability to resolve conflict between individual goals and other peoples' goals, sometimes expressed as the difficulty in 'enrolling' people. A related idea is the explicit and implicit suggestion of paradox involved in resolution of goals. One participant in a leader survey, having said that there was no particular problems in implementing the leadership training, laid out three similar but distinct paradoxes: (1) it was a very empowering exercise BUT maybe provided too much freedom; (2) management is bogged down by strategic thinking BUT also by small operational matters; and (3) certainty is important as in doing what we say and knowing where we are going BUT we want to be involved in deciding and not just be told.

The paradox of freedom and control also indicated the explicit and implicit issue of power, either in comments about lack of empowerment or in comments about individuals who reverted to control as a way of managing. In some cases the appeal to rationality can be seen as an implicit call for control, especially when the question of whose rationality we are talking about remains open. Being refused permission or resources for a project

was also seen as a means of control over participants' freedom to act as a leader.

In reflecting on my experience against the broader themes of constraints to leadership expressed by the interview participants, the idea of the leader's interests becomes paramount. If there is an expectation from followers that the leader will also represent their interests and the leader does not dispel that expectation, then either the leader's interest includes the follower's interests or the leader is seen as inauthentic and lacking in integrity.

Heidegger described authenticity in terms of the relationship of an individual to the 'they' pointing to ways in which we can interpret ourselves as part of a 'we' (or 'they-self' in the translation of Heidegger's term 'das Man selbst') (Heidegger 1962, p. 167). Reading through the views of others about their problems in practicing leadership there is a very confused set of concepts around 'they', 'we' and 'I', which again reinforces the views of Day and Harrison about individual, relational, and collective self-concepts. The tendency to blame others can be seen as a failure to take individual responsibility for relational or collective obligations. The choice of which 'we' we are part of has the potential to fracture the organisation into uncollected relational self-concepts. Inability to resolve these confusions makes the challenge of acting with integrity more difficult because there is no clarity about the expectations of others.

Acting with integrity involves a profound awareness of the context of the leader's or follower's actions. It can also be seen as self-reflexive aspect of leading or following that acting with integrity implies constant inquiry into the context of leading or following and the extent to which purpose or resistance is consistent with the leader's and follower's self, relational and collective interests. Where this is not the case, the leader is obliged to seek change or at least clarify their opposed position. Followers also need to act with integrity and in so doing need to constantly assess the context of their followership and where necessary need to act to make changes where their leader is not acting in their interests. In this case, the relationship between and the roles of leader and follower are always in flux; the follower becomes

the leader through resistance when the relational or collective interests have been defined by the followers. The power dynamics between leaders and followers shift as the interests (or goals or purposes) of the collective changes and so the differentiation of who is leader and who is follower becomes problematic. The complexity of the dynamic relatedness of leader and follower, and purpose and resistance is aptly described in terms of complex responsive processes. The dominant discourse of a successful organisation will be about on-going resolution of interests in pursuit of a common goal. Differing individual interests make this discourse primarily a discourse about power.

### ***A perspective on my development and that of others***

Beyond my personal experience as a leader, I have also been a participant observer in many events providing significant possibilities for individuals to lead. To some degree the themes that emerge from my personal experience have also been influenced by the conversations I have had with other leaders and my observations of their actions as leaders. Taken together my experience is a composite of the emotional impact of personal involvement and my detached interpretation of others' actions. The narrative themes presented within this thesis necessarily emerge from these melded recollections of the emotional experiences and interpreted situations.

The interviews with other leaders provided themes that seemed relevant to leading and may be a common set of themes for most leader training. One difference in the themes that emerged from my narrative was the positive concept of integrity. This is not surprising because 'integrity' was not a feature of leadership training before 2010. The importance of this expanded theme is that it incorporates human and non-human contextual elements with the obligations ranging from interpersonal promises to jurisdictional and institutional requirements. Integrity becomes a way of looking at the many aspects of relatedness, whether in direct terms of promises to others or indirect terms of commitment to norms, rules, regulations and laws. The concept sees us in a web of relatedness from direct human contact through to organisational and institutional abstractions.

The commitment to 'honouring your word' is most easily understood in our day to day interactions with others. It is about relatedness to the people around us. However, the obligations become more conceptual as we ascend the ladder of integrity to the level of laws and conventions. There are important implications for leaders from this insight about integrity that I think provide a more articulated view of authenticity. The first is the obligation to be aware of the expectations of others. Beyond the simple obligation of honouring one's word, other obligations include engaging in conversations to ensure that expectations are explicit, as well as understanding the network of cultural and legal expectations. But, as a leader we are also obliged to act to change any expectation or rule that we believe is contrary to the organisation's interests. The same logic applies to followers and this observation validates resistance.

### ***Reflexive analysis***

Applying reflexive analysis to the broader narrative of creating a 'leadership culture' requires me to ask how I influenced the situation through my presence, my actions, my preconceptions or assumptions, and through others' perceptions of me. It also requires me to examine how the tools I've used to examine my involvement have changed what I saw and how I've interpreted the narrative. Through this inquiry I want to be able to see my biases and perceptions, how it may have been different if the context was different, how who I am affected how I understood the situation. In the end I want to be able to say how my beliefs have changed through this experience.

There's no denying that I was a central actor in this story. I sat among my peers and contributed to decisions that resulted in our attempt to establish a 'leadership culture'. I contributed to decisions to select the training provider and to select the training candidates. When I look back at the memos and emails I wrote at that time I was supportive of our decisions and actions.

I influenced the choices we made through my advocacy for 'leadership' and the idea that if more people acted as leaders we would create a context in which we always acted in concert. In particular I wrote a background paper

following a discussion in our Management Team meeting on 20 November 2003 that addressed the “need to address leadership training”. In the paper I wrote I purported to have done a “quick review of the literature on leadership” but focused on the writings of James McGregor Burns (Burns 1978) and Bernard Bass (Bass 1985) and the idea of “transformational leadership”.

I wrote about the concepts of ‘transformational leadership’ which I claimed included “charismatic, inspirational and visionary leadership” and compared them to the concepts of “transactional leadership” and “exchange leadership”. I argued in favour of ‘transformational leadership’ and against ‘transactional leadership’. My argument was presented in a scholarly way, complete with references and quotations. I presented a view that the academic references indicated a truth about the question of which ‘type’ of leadership we should choose.

I can look back now at the way I structured and framed my argument in a different light. My aim was to influence the decision we eventually made and my mind was made up; I believed the things I had read and I believed the decision I was advocating was the right decision. In the way these organisational papers are written, I had established my preference and I selected arguments and ‘evidence’ that supported my preference.

In summary my argument was that there was considerable empirical evidence that ‘transformational leadership’ existed, that ‘transformational leadership’ and ‘transactional leadership’ were not mutually exclusive, but that a ‘transformational’ leader inspired followers to go beyond the follower’s self-interests for a higher collective purpose, mission or vision. I made the comment that our Management Team clearly aspired to create ‘transformational leaders’.

I addressed the issue of feasibility of success by asking the question ‘can transformational leaders be trained?’. I referenced an on-line resource written by Olga Epitropaki (Epitropaki 2003) that stated that managers “can learn how to become more transformational with significant positive implications for their organisations”. I then compared the published course

outlines of the provider we eventually chose against descriptions of leadership courses provided by Harvard and Georgetown Universities, and concluded that the language used in the course descriptions was similar and consistent with 'transformational leadership'.

In re-reading my own background paper I can now see that I had formed my opinion, had collected 'facts' that supported that decision, and was 'selling' that opinion to my peers. The selling points I used targeted what I believed were the sensitivities and aspirations of the management team. We had gone through a difficult economic time from 2000 to 2003 and we needed to find ways to encourage growth, and we knew that growth required change and that change would meet resistance. We were looking for an answer that would push through change and we realised that we as a limited number of senior managers couldn't do that ourselves. We needed to enroll our broader group of managers in this task, and that meant that we needed to expand 'leadership' in the organisation. These were my assumptions and in my background paper I set out to convince others that leader training would achieve this utopian vision.

I have changed my views significantly since 2003 and it is difficult to look back and interpret the world I saw it then as I see it now. Reading my own words from that time I can see that I used 'knowledge' as the basis of my argument. 'Knowledge' was represented by published academic work, but it was clear that I used the 'knowledge' selectively to support an argument I had already assumed was right. In doing so I think I reflected a process that is used commonly in organisational settings when we use knowledge to bolster power. Within the organisation I worked in, which was an organisation of scientists and engineers, this was a common ploy and many hours of management discussions were consumed by debates about the whose knowledge was better. As I look back now I can see these discussions as not about knowledge but about power. In this sense, we wield knowledge as one wields a weapon in combat. I was playing this game and not playing it well. My brief descriptions of types of leadership assumed that these concepts were empirically 'proved', and that means that I asserted

that as concepts they represented something that existed in the reality of our organisational life.

If my current 'me' was transported back in time I would write very differently. I would write about the doubt I have about 'leadership' and the aspirations we have for it. I would not advocate for the type of training we used. In fact I would talk and write the way I talk and write now. In saying this all I am really saying is the self-evident assertion that if I was a different 'me' I would say and do different things.

My identity in 2003 was what it was, the product of my life, experiences and decisions to that time. My identity now is also what it is, a product of what I was in 2003 and the life, experiences and decisions that have happened in the interim. If I look at the key elements of what I believed in 2003, I think I had a strong orientation towards participatory process which was a product of my work on community development projects. Within the management team I was the only member who had that experience. From my current perspective I think I was a little naïve about the difficulties of participatory process and the inherent political nature of working together. However, while my perspective of the organisation as a community was based on my bias toward participatory process I think it reflected a desire for openness and inclusion that was a shared aspiration of our team. We didn't have anyone advocating for a top-down authoritarian approach which required a more structured transactional approach to leadership. If so we would probably have chosen leader training that emphasized domination, hard negotiation and manipulation.

I think my leaning towards participatory processes was somewhat romantic, believing in the ideal without understanding the challenges to its achievement. Within an organisation with a primary goal of increasing shareholder value, the overarching emphasis is on those tasks that generate revenue and control costs. Without this foundation little else is achievable. On top of those fundamental concerns are the concerns about improving how we go about generating revenue and controlling costs. Within engineering consulting organisations where we measure productivity in terms of the utilization of time to chargeable or non-chargeable activities, and

where there is competitive pressure, we generally require around 80% of time to be spent on chargeable activities. Management is an overhead and the greater the cost of management the higher the ratio of chargeable time of fee earning people needs to be. Participation is a time consuming exercise. The sense making element of participation takes time. Leading through participatory processes is expensive and to be practical in our organisation could only be implemented within the time available for non-chargeable work.

For leaders to be inclusive in their decision making they need to have relationships with their followers that allow quick resolution of conflicting ways of seeing the daily problems that are encountered. I can see this same consideration in the growing literature on 'relational leadership' (Uhl-Bien 2006).

But as I approach 'relational leadership' as another way of seeing the work of leaders, I remind myself that in 2003 I had built a lens through which to look at 'leadership' and that lens magnified the concept of 'transformational leadership'. The magnification was a distortion in the sense that what I saw was different to what others might have seen and indeed what I might have seen if I had constructed a different lens. If I am now constructing a new lens for myself I need to examine the defects of that lens which will result in distortion. At least now I see what I am doing when I construct such a lens and can interpret the actions of others in terms of the different distortions in their way of seeing what I'm seeing.

## ***Deconstruction***

### ***The language of 'leadership'***

Within the conversations I've had and within the theory I've read the problem of language has been a dominant theme. The pedagogy of the course that our trainees undertook required the introduction of unfamiliar language to disclose familiar aspects of the participants' everyday life. It was common for participants to mistake the pedagogical tool of unfamiliar language as an essential feature of the capability they were developing. This was exhibited through surprise at the difficulty of bringing the specialised pedagogical

language back into the organisational discourse. Some suggested that the organisational discourse needed to change to incorporate the pedagogical language, others that they adapted their use of the language to suit the organisational discourse. Some entirely missed the central point of the importance of language in organisational changing and felt that there was too much talk and not enough action.

Beyond the language practices of leading I have already suggested that there is a possibility that 'leadership' is a plastic or elevator word. This suggests that the word has a rhetorical force that allows it to do more than signify a phenomenon. The suggestion here is that the use of the word 'leadership' is itself performative. To make sense of this idea I've looked at the rhetorical use of the word and the context in which it is used. My interpretation of this idea proceeds by examining the use of the word and the contexts in which it is used. One of the most important contexts in which it is used is in the social construction of the organisation. I want to understand whether the assertion of leadership is in itself a claim to authority and a way to rearrange the relations between people in the organisation.

### ***Metaphors in the accounts about leadership***

The theoretical basis of this approach is provided by Lakoff and Johnson's description of the role of metaphor in what they call the 'human conceptual system' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980a). It is based on the division of language into non-metaphorical concepts based on experience and metaphorical concepts constructed from non-metaphorical concepts. For example, Searle shows how we construct social reality through metaphorical associations (Searle 1995a, 2005). Lakoff and Johnson observe that most of our concepts are abstract (Lakoff & Johnson 1980a, p.198). When combined with the description provided by Searle of our constructed abstract reality we start to appreciate the complexity and inter-relatedness of language based social constructions within which we live and about which most of our sense making is directed.

Using this theoretical framework one way to talk about leaders in organisations is that they are influential in constructing the social reality of

the organisation; by which I mean that they are actively involved in the social construction of what organisational members believe about the organisation which in turn influences organisational members' experience of their organisation.

Recognition that language is performative can be extended to include the emotional impact of language and the combined impact of language and related non-linguistic practices. In my conversations with people who had undertaken training and were in their own view acting as leaders it is possible to differentiate what they said about leading and the emotion with which they conveyed their views. We can interpret their hesitation and other characteristics of how they spoke as signs of their certainty or strength of belief. When faced by them I will interpret from their demeanor whether they believe strongly in the sense they are conveying. In this way language can be interpreted as performative in its sense making, and its rhetorical and somatic impact.

While we can ask people directly how they lead we need to be aware that practical knowledge is embodied and in this sense our representation of it is poor because we know more than we can tell (Gherardi 2009, p. 124). Looking at the metaphors people use in talking about leadership and organisation is one way of revealing the sense that people make of leading. Analysis of how they speak about leading reveals the difficulty of some in expressing the experience of leading. When people talk about leading in an abstract way it is unlikely that they are talking about their experience of leading; instead they are talking about what they learned about 'leadership' from someone else.

I re-read the accounts of leadership that I collected during my evaluation of our leadership program, including my own, to examine the metaphors used and what they tell about how we experience leadership. I was interested in looking at the deeper metaphorical structure of these accounts of leadership by applying the insights provided by Lakoff and Johnson by going beyond the immediate metaphors to look for metaphors that referred to foundational ways people talk about their world.

When people talked about leadership and people in organisations they described them as if they have physical space. This space can be somewhere where 'the room to do this is stifled'. We can change the dimension of this space when we 'reframe' it. We can 'turn things around', and our talk is 'properly structured'. Within this space there is a foreground and background. The space can be open or closed as when something 'closes you to what's being said to you'. The space has boundaries that are 'limiting', and the boundaries become 'barriers'.

Within these spaces there are depths and heights. There are 'profound understanding' and 'higher management'. The spaces can be built when we are 'building for the future'.

We speak about organisations and their members as if they have physical properties. They have substance and continuity except when there are 'gaps' which we need to identify. We can 'consolidate the organisation'. Some traits are 'embedded' in the organisation or person. There is also flexibility, elasticity, and strength. Organisations have 'strengths and weaknesses'. The corporation or its members can be 'inflexible'.

In this metaphorical material world change happens because of forces that act with power. There are 'motives' that cause us to change. Sometimes there is 'someone guiding you' or you can be 'empowered'. Circumstance can act with forces, such as 'the pressure of chargeable hours'. Initiatives need to be 'pushed'. Things that are not helpful can be 'suppressed'.

In the metaphorical organisational world, the organisation and people in it have different states. Circumstances can 'turn people off' and sometimes 'people aren't open'. Importantly, this metaphorical world is also metaphorically visible, allowing you to 'see why you do what you do'

There is also a temporal dimension but time is a valuable resource. Sometimes we have the 'luxury of time' and sometimes we are 'wasting' time, and it is 'easy to have your whole day consumed'. It is a concern when the 'pace of the course was too slow'.

Being on a journey is a well-used metaphor. It is common in the metaphorical organisational world. We have 'got to where we are' and you can see 'why you are where you are' and 'where people are wanting to go'. We arrive at our destination when we 'achieve certain ends'. But it is not an easy journey and we can always 'slip back into old ways' or 'revert back to the old flawed ways of doing things'. We can get in the way of our own journey when we are an 'obstacle to my own performance'.

We also see that 'leadership' is a tool and that organisations are broken. We have 'techniques' to apply that involve 'controlling the situations around you'. Things will be bad if they are 'not fixed'. Tools are 'manipulated'. We 'dig through interpretations'.

Sometimes the tools of leadership become weapons that we use in a metaphorical fight. Our words become 'a rod to beat someone with' or a 'lever against the person the email is addressed to'. Sometimes the opponent is your self and 'you must challenge yourself' and 'combat those weaknesses'. Sometimes our fight is to be free and achievement is 'quite liberating' but at other times our 'wings are clipped'. Sometimes the other's defence becomes a problem when 'peoples' shutters come down'. Most importantly, circumstances themselves can be the opponent but 'you can't let it get on top of you'.

Many other metaphors surfaced in my conversations with leaders. Leadership was a game or competition. Of course there were 'goals' but sometimes it was others who were 'playing games'. At other times we are parents or gardeners and we are nurturing. There is also the fear of cyborgs when we anticipated 'a robotic management course'. Most importantly we divide our metaphorical world in parts and wholes. We see ourselves as 'both as a manager and as a person' and we put 'limitations and excuses on' ourselves. We have to 'go down into yourself and find internal traits' and have the 'ability to look at' ourselves. We don't want to define ourselves as our job.

But of course none of this is real, it is 'all talk' and 'no action'. Despite all this talk about 'leadership', it 'hasn't translated into anything on the ground'. Our yearning to make sense of our abstract world is pervasive and the irony is stark. Organisations are abstract constructed realities which are the domain within which leaders practice. We construct the domain within which 'leadership' happens through talking. We train our managers to be leaders and yet at the end of training they are still looking for action beyond talking (and listening, writing, and reading). I know that the same people who say these things are powerful communicators, they articulate possible futures, they draw people in, and they influence their listeners. The statement about less talk and more action is paradoxically a call to arms with rhetorical force.

### ***'Leadership' analogies and metaphors***

Analogies of 'leadership' as jazz and sport are common. I'm careful to use 'analogy' here rather than 'metaphor' because the comparisons between 'leadership', jazz and sport are based on similarity rather than an assertion of sameness. With analogies insight can be gained by examining their differences as well as their similarities.

I prefer the jazz analogy over the sport analogy because of the analogic relationship between organisational context, 'field' and 'composition'. In a sense I think this preference reveals a desire to not go too quickly to the more obvious metaphorical representation of the organisational performance space as a physical space. The same could be said of the analogy of organisation to theatre and the organisational context as a physical stage. The analogy between organisational context and composition or harmonic framework allows an analogic relationship between a dynamic organisational context and an improvised composition that emerges from the players' complex relating. I will return to this analogy in the next chapter.

The metaphors of Alvesson & Spicer (2011) and (Western 2007) are metaphors derived from broader discourses about leadership and how we chose to talk about organisations. They are not the immediate metaphors that practitioners use when they talk about their practice of leadership but are the larger discourses of scholars of leadership. That is not to say that

practitioners don't use these metaphors. In fact they apply them liberally in a type of metaphoric mash-up.

The analogic description of organisations and the metaphors we apply to leading are part of the organisational discourse. For example the metaphor of the leader as gardener is reflected in the way some leaders talk about looking after their people and helping them develop. But which came first? Did the metaphor generate the discourse or did the discourse generate the metaphor? In Fairhurst's view the directionality seems clear: "metaphors derive from systems of thought within society at a given time in history", and we can call these systems "discourses" and view them as "the primary vehicles of culture" (Fairhurst 2011, p. 181). I think this makes sense from the perspective of talking about leaders using metaphors familiar to their followers to communicate complex organisational objectives efficiently. However, one interpretation of Lakoff and Johnson's view of embodied metaphors suggests that the directionality is non-metaphoric concepts to metaphoric concepts to conceptual discourse. If metaphor is our way of making sense of our context, the discourse will change as the context changes and the metaphors that make sense will change. The challenges we face will generate new ways of making sense and the metaphors chosen will constitute new discourses.

However, in some ways the discussion of whether metaphor drives discourse or discourse drives metaphor is a 'chicken or egg' argument where directionality is a distraction. The important aspect is that the relationship between metaphor and discourse is fundamental to both sense making and social construction.

### ***The rhetorical force of the word 'leadership'***

Many of the words I use when I talk about 'leadership' are words I find commonly used in both academic and lay descriptions of 'leadership' and organisations. Within these words I find many metaphors that extend our experience of the physical world to provide our understanding of the conceptual world of organisations. I often use the same spatial metaphor as Day and Harrison (2007 p. 362) when they talk about "multilevel"

organisations. Spatial metaphors for organisations are so frequently applied that it may be that the spatial metaphor is a dead metaphor and that we now naturally think about organisations as physical spaces. Within this dead metaphor it is important that we remind ourselves that organisations are imaginary and not actual physical spaces, and that they exist only as long as we believe they exist.

We so easily talk about 'promotion up the hierarchy' or 'managing up' that we are unaware that we are using a spatial metaphor. This however ignores the fact that our relationship with an organisation is defined in these spatial terms and our mental model of an organisation is likely to be in the form of an organisation chart that acts as a map. In this way it is natural to assume that the person named at the top of the organisational chart is a leader.

An organisation chart forces binary distinctions. 'Up' and 'down' are generally considered in terms of more importance or power. In my everyday relations with others I implicitly know how I relate to others according to the organisation chart. This knowledge creates a power dynamic which is mostly implicit but which from time to time is used explicitly. Job titles become imbued with power in their suggestion of where the owner may sit within the spatiality of the organisation chart. The organisation chart maps the formal power relationships but says nothing about the day to day working of power.

Organisations are not organisation charts and relations in organisations are not lines drawn between people, they are the results of interactions that people have with each other as humans. 'Subordinates' may have more skills and may threaten or challenge their 'superiors'. Often the most difficult relationships are between peers working together when decisions need to be negotiated, when negotiations break down, and when decisions need to be ratified by the authority of a 'superior' to be enforced.

Our use of the spatial organisation metaphor makes description of power relations efficient and quick but inherently limited in describing the richness of human relations. Our acceptance of the power relations is embedded in the spatial metaphor as mapped by the organisation chart. The formal

authority of the organisation chart rules our organisational life except where we see that we have skills and influence over those around us that bears no relationship to the chart. Then the spatial metaphor becomes a barrier to our performance. The people 'higher up' hold us back or they don't know what they are doing.

### ***'Leadership' is a trope***

In the imaginary world of the organisation where we use metaphors to relate our constructed concepts back to our experience of the physical world, 'leadership' is also a metaphor. For example, we can relate the simple idea of 'leadership' to the act of leading a blind person through a door. In fact, 'leadership' in this case is metonymic because we are relating actions in the physical world to actions in our imaginary conceptual organisational world. This is a very basic trope that contains the tripod: a leader, someone being led, and an objective of getting through the door. When we ask where the fourth component (resistance) is we need to look carefully at the blind person and ask ourselves what they believe and what they are feeling. We need to examine their belief that the person who is leading them has their best interest in mind, is taking care about how they do the leading, that they will be warned of any impediments, and so on. The description of leading the blind person becomes richer when we consider the attitude and care of the leader and the beliefs and trust of the person being led. The degree of resistance of the person being led will show up as the tentativeness of each step, in the actual physical resistance they provide to the guidance of the leader.

The metonymic transfer of the physical act of leading to the conceptual act of leading happens when our goal becomes organisational or institutional. It's easy to see that in regular interactions we have the 'tripod': an aspiring leader, an 'other' to be influenced, and a purpose motivating the aspiring leader. Often it's also clear the aspiring leader is also the other's other, and the other is an aspiring leader with their own purpose which we are calling resistance. The power struggle is over the competing purpose. This is illustrated throughout the stories that I've related. In the case of Susan

announcing the management team's decision, Susan's purpose is to carry forward the management team decision, but the other in this case is represented in the initially unorganized resistance to the decision.

The unorganized resistance quickly becomes organized as the audience members sense that others in the audience share their disquiet at having a pre-made decision foisted on them. The organisation of the audience is around a purpose of resisting the decision to force the management team to reconsider and allow the audience into the decision making process. This purpose is never stated but is implicitly understood; the organisation is never discussed but emerges through the discussion. Susan's response is not to immediately assert her formal authority but instead to let authority emerge through the discussion. The audience has power because Susan does not want to use her formal authority to force the decision on the group; she wants a united team and she knows that asserting formal authority will not resolve the grievances of the audience. She is confident that allowing a discussion of the decision will not change the outcome, and as it happened that was the outcome. More importantly, in a discursive sense the purpose of the audience was achieved. They resisted the decision being implemented without their involvement. Susan's decision to allow discussion also allowed the audience to achieve its purpose without changing the purpose of the management team. I can't say whether Susan saw that the two purposes could be achieved, that she saw that they were not mutually exclusive. By allowing both purposes to be achieved Susan created a 'we' that was more powerful than the 'us' and 'them' that would otherwise have occurred.

By reducing my analysis of the contests of leading down to the four components of 'leadership' and the underlying metonymy that allows us to make sense of what we are doing, we can see the relational aspects of organisations more clearly. Resistance emerges as a clash of purpose. Anyone is aspiring to lead if they have a purpose and they are prepared to argue for their purpose and against any other purpose. The clash of purposes may be direct or indirect, by which I mean that purposes may be

directly opposed or indirectly opposed. When Susan presented the management team's decision the purpose of the resistance was not to oppose the decision but to oppose the imposition of the decision without the audience's involvement. In this case the opposing purposes were not directly opposed so Susan was able to act to resolve both purposes.

In the case of my performance appraisal of Dave our purposes were directly opposed. I wanted Dave to change the way he was behaving and Dave didn't want to change. In other similar situations I have been able to separate my purpose from the purpose of the other by delving into the other's awareness of the impact of their behaviour on those around them. Often their behaviour is misguided because they are unaware of the effect they are having on others. In Dave's case he was proud of the effect he was having. His competitive nature saw a win as a win. This discussion became a deeper exploration of Dave's beliefs and their incompatibility with the team I was trying to build. Although Dave changed a little after our conversation he always struggled to suppress his competitive nature. Dave saw himself as a leader because he believed he could always assert his purpose and win, but from my perspective the extent of Dave's purpose was often only to win and this directly opposed to my purpose in building an effective team.

The perspectives that are missing from my stories are the perspectives of the other actors in the stories. We can only ever make sense of another through our interpretation of their behaviours and what they say. We infer from this their purpose and make assessment of whether those purposes are aligned or opposed with others. We enter into power struggles on the basis of our assessment. The potential for unnecessary conflict derives from our interpretation of the motivations of others. One aspect of leading is interpreting motivation and creating discussion that make motivation transparent, and when there is conflict to deal with the conflict.

I referred earlier to the introduction by Oswick et al (2004) of a discussion of dissonant tropes. The lead dissonant trope is irony but also included are paradox, sarcasm, parody, satire and anomaly. Within the organisational discourse the use of these dissonant tropes can be seen in the use of

contradiction, humour, understatement, or caustic commentary, and they function by highlighting incongruity, ambiguity and contradictions. Most importantly they undermine the prevailing view and may challenge the accepted knowledge in use.

The dissonant tropes indicate resistance, and resistance indicates a competing purpose. The cartoons of Scott Adams provide a useful illustration, for example his book “I’m not anti-business I’m anti-idiot” (Adams 1998). Dilbert as the main character has to persevere in the face of a manager portrayed as an idiot, Dogbert portrayed as a cunning consultant and Catbert portrayed as an evil HR Director, among other characters. Dilbert’s peers are usually portrayed sympathetically while those outside the team are portrayed unsympathetically. The situations portrayed are satirical representations of common organisational situations.

In the case of the hapless stories of Dilbert the satire represents a resistance view that seems to be common in organisations I’ve worked in and visited. I regularly see Dilbert cartoons pinned to work stations or on coffee room notice boards. The interesting aspect is that they appear at all levels of the organisations. It seems that everyone’s colleagues are alright and everyone’s boss or at least the boss several steps up the organisation chart is an idiot. Unsurprisingly this is a view that comes through our internal staff surveys which often show a strong collegial engagement and disaffection with more remote parts of the organisation. While Dilbert cartoons on notice boards and workstations are indicators of a resistance view they are also useful in surfacing resistance in teams because they represent common resistance views. In this sense humour masks organisational resistance but can also be used to unmask it.

Not everyone has the satirical brilliance of Scott Adams and resistance is more often expressed through sarcasm. When reading through staff survey comments there is a regular use of sarcasm and in some cases sarcasm seems to represent a hardening of resistance that is one step removed from abuse. Compared to sarcasm, paradox is more difficult to identify. Earlier I used the example of a participant in a leader survey whose response

included three paradoxes: (1) it was a very empowering exercise BUT maybe provided too much freedom; (2) management is bogged down by strategic thinking BUT also by small operational matters; and (3) certainty is important as in doing what we say and knowing where we are going BUT we want to be involved in deciding and not just be told. It was only when I examined the response of this respondent that I saw these paradoxes. In the real time flow of conversation I think I would have missed it apart from a strange sense of dissonance in the person's commentary. The resistance here is about uncertainty and asks the question "how can I move forward when I don't know which direction is forward?"

In constructing my stories I have created characters that are meant to represent leaders. They should be seen only as characters because I have given them capabilities derived from hindsight and my own interpretation of practices of leading. The stories don't always represent the messiness of real time encounters where the tropes are flying and all parties to the discussion are presenting their purpose and resistance and competing for commitment. These are the discussions where relations are formed based on intuitive alignment of people who see commonality in their purpose. Our attempt at developing a 'culture of leadership' was about training people who could engage in relational activities in a way that achieved a shared view of the way forward, with the hope that this would occur at all levels in the organisation.

### ***What's missing from my narrative?***

Language is central to my story because it is the medium through which organisational discourse is constructed by leaders. As I re-read my stories I can see that in telling these stories I have not reflected the full use of tropes, both positive and negative. It is clear that metaphor and its variants are the tools of constructing organisational concepts while irony and its variants are the tools used to destroy organisational concepts. But in my stories I haven't used tropes extensively. It is only by going back to the transcribed words of people that I spoke to and the response of survey participants that I see the tropes in use. This makes sense when I consider the stories as my

recollections because there is simply an intent to represent what occurred limited by my inadequacy as a creative writer. I've also not chosen to write satirically to suggest alternative interpretations. So, as ever, I can only really represent my interpretation and what's missing is the contest of ideas that drives creative and destructive language use.

### ***Critical analysis***

#### ***Leaderism***

An important part of my experience of 'leadership' was our attempt to create a 'culture of leadership'. There is some evidence to suggest that our aspirations were part of a broader social belief that a culture of leadership is a possibility. I make this claim on the basis of what O'Reilly and Reed call "leaderism" (O'Reilly & Reed 2010, 2011). Leaderism is described as "the belief that many core aspects of social life can and should be coordinated by one or more individuals who give direction and/or purpose to social activity conducted by themselves and others" (O'Reilly & Reed 2010, p. 964).

O'Reilly and Reed suggest that the ideology of leaderism is supported by a number of narratives: competition is endemic; there are specially gifted people who can ensure survival and progress; these people use moral, intellectual, interpersonal, and politico-cultural resources to achieve social coordination; these resources justify empowering the specially gifted people; progress will result in benefits for all; and the benefits that flow to followers justifies an expectation of the followers' support to their leaders (ibid, p.964). Leaderism is evidenced by the excessive use of the words 'leadership', 'leaders', and 'leading'. It is a "social phenomenon ... composed of a series of inter-related ideas and beliefs, which bear a 'family resemblance' to each other, but which do not necessarily evidence an essential attribute" (ibid, p. 963)

What is important for me in O'Reilly and Reed's description of the UK Government's adoption of 'leaderism' is the analysis of how the UK Government arrived at 'leadership' as the answer to their problems. The authors suggest that there were three narratives that contributed to the

adoption of 'leaderism'. First 'leaders' and 'leadership' would "radically reshape the nature and content of 'public services' and the manner in which they are provided and consumed". Second, 'leadership' and 'leaders' would alleviate and absorb "the endemic tensions between politicians, managers, professionals and the public ... by drawing them together into a unifying discourse of a leading vision ...in which they, collectively, play a major role". And third, 'leaders' are an "essential ingredient of the new governance of public service organisations" and include "public service managers", "frontline professional staff, members of the public, and private and voluntary organisational members". Within this aspiration lies "contradictory tension" between "the delegation of reform to public service leaders and the promotion of their future autonomy as authors of their own reforms" which is "symptomatic of the contested and contradictory nature of current government policies and mechanisms" (ibid, p.961).

O'Reilly and Reed's summary of how 'leadership' came to be the answer to the UK Government's governance problem is strikingly similar to the circumstances that led us to adopt leadership as the solution to the problem of organisational alignment.

In fact I could not have written a better description of the conditions that led to our idea of a 'culture of leadership'. It was certainly the case that we faced the complexity of managing a growing organisation where control and autonomy were creating 'contradictory tensions'. Our organisational history is a story of a rapidly growing company where the day to day interactions of managers became insufficient to allow the time for shared sense making and reflective social construction. Analysis of the history of this time could well focus on failure of 'systems' to cope with rapid growth but not identify the loss of time together as senior managers in human interaction. Many people who joined us through acquisitions had only ever worked in single office environments with a founding entrepreneurial owner/manager. The organisational reality was closely related to the human reality through frequent face to face interaction and conversations. From this 'human' scale reality they were thrust into an institutional abstract reality that included

discussion of values, visions, culture, governance, and so on. Our 'culture of leadership' was a response to this loss of human interaction that made sense of organisational objectives and its replacement with an institutional abstract involvement expressed in corporate jargon. The culture of leadership was to consist of people at the local 'human' level that were part of a network of beliefs and aspirations, and who could influence others to adopt these beliefs and aspirations.

In retrospect we were attempting to control the complex responsive processes that constitute the organisation. Our attempts were not the only attempts to do this. Local managers were creating their own influence by creating beliefs about their local teams and one way they did that was to create boundaries using language that implied 'us' and 'them' relationality. Many of these local managers were the same people we trained as leaders, creating a conflict between their identity of being part of a network of 'leaders' and their identity as local leader creating a future for their local team.

While leaderism is a new word, managerialism and technicism are not. Managerialism (Mowles 2011; Parker 2002; Preston 2001) refers to a "belief in a strategic approach" where "by setting goals all of us will get to where we wish to be" (Preston 2001 p. 344). This approach includes prevalent ideas "that management is a science, and the manager and/or consultant is a detached, objective observer of organisations, who can use highly abstract tools and frameworks largely derived from systems thinking to diagnose organisational 'problems' and recommend and implement wholesale 'solutions'" (Mowles 2011, p. 26).

Technicism (Harmon 1998; McSwain, White & Bruce 1989; Onyx & Dovey 1999; Stanley 1978) refers to a "metaphorical misapplication of some of the assumptions, imagery, and linguistic habits of science and technology to areas of discourse in which such mistakes obscure the free and responsible nature of human action (Stanley 1978 p. xiii).

Leaderism, managerialism and technicism are ideologically constructed from an objectivist positivist position that assumes our ability to design organisations and to develop them as designed, to cause change to happen in the complex responsive processes of relating. This is directly opposed to the view of complex responsive processes that suggest that we are constituted by the organisational world as much as we constitute the organisation.

### ***Relationality enacted***

Carroll and Simpson see a distinction between leader development that is "dominated by the conceptual, skill-building, personal growth and feedback orientations identified decades ago" and a "sociality-based and relationally orientated form of leadership development" with a "strong focus on working with assumptions, identity and power" (Carroll and Simpson 2012 p.1302).

The responsibility to make changes and in particular the responsibility to change one's self requires a high degree of reflection and commitment. For example, the process of asking for and accepting feedback seems not to be a natural inclination, but it was seen as an important aspect of initiating and grounding change. In my narrative, George is a person who shows a preference for establishing process and procedures. Seeing leader development as a structured set of practices is indicative of these preferences. It is not surprising that George was attracted to a methodical approach to capability development. Importantly, George's realisation that 'feedback' should be accepted as 'absolute truth' provides a description of how a leader's relationships are constructed by simple changes in perspective. Importantly, feedback is the primary way for resistance to be understood by leaders in terms of their own way of being in relationship to others.

Carroll and Simpson's core argument is that "leadership development may be understood productively as an ongoing relational process, in which social capital is constructed continuously in the interactions of collaborative practice" (2012, p.1286). They describe an analytical device consisting of frames and sociality, which they describe as the "dynamic framing

movements", in which "frames of meaning are imposed ... creating possibilities for new insight and direction". In this model 'leadership' emerges from a process which "requires both access to a repertoire of different frames of meaning and a means of ... moving between these frames". 'Leadership' development should "be concerned with increasing the repertoire of available frames, while also improving the collective capacity to move amongst multiple frames in conversation" (2012, p 1289).

In the on-line conversations analysed by Carroll and Simpson, specific frames of reference, interpreted as collections of metaphors and other linguistic attributes, were used to show the dynamic movement of meaning making through online conversations. My own experience is that even in real time an effective leader is implicitly carrying out a similar type of work. When George says that one of his hardest exercises was accepting feedback unquestioningly, he doesn't mean that he believes everything he is told. Rather, he is talking about not reframing the opinions of others by interpreting them against his own frame. Instead he accepts others' opinions as coming from a frame that is different to his own.

Whereas Carroll and Simpson have the luxury of transcripts that can be read and re-read and the time to reflect and analyze, and their leaders are engaged in an online discussion where their response can be delayed, leaders responding in real time do not have the same gap between sensing and responding. What George is describing as one of his learned practices is the creation of his own 'transcript' of the conversation by not 'filtering' it into his memory through his own interpretive frame. By doing this he can compare the implicit frame of the offered opinion against his own frame.

I have worked with good leaders who will ask for time to consider what they have heard. George will often mull over things that he has heard and will come back later with questions. These questions are indicative of the movement George is making between his frame and the frame to which he has been exposed, and this 'mulling over' could be interpreted as what Carroll and Simpson call the sociality of leading.

Talking about 'leadership' as either entity based or relational leadership seems to equate to talking about networks as either a collection of nodes or a collection of connections. In this case the quality of the relationality of "leadership" is very much determined by the behaviour of the entities. In recognizing sociality as movement between frames, Carroll and Simpson also recognize "various practices that are imperative in strengthening sociality", among which are "curiosity, sustained questioning, a comfort with ambiguity and confusion, and the ability to live within complexity" (2012 p.1306).

My account of George's experience set against the empirical work and theory development of Carroll and Simpson reveals the movement in my own way of thinking about leadership. We set out to establish a 'culture or leadership' and our means to achieve that was to put enough managers through 'leadership' development to change the way the organisation operated. The movement in understanding 'leadership' development described by Carroll and Simpson from a focus on individual skills to understanding the sociality required is evidenced by the experience of our trained managers. My conversations with a number of these managers reveal common experiences of seeing benefit in their individual skills but struggling to make an impact on the 'culture' of the parts of the organisation they worked in. George is an exception. He has changed the way he relates to others and in doing so he has changed the way those others around him relate to each other.

An important observation was made about leaders providing leadership through the values they hold. This goes straight to the point made previously about freedom in organisations. If a leader as a follower in an organisation leads through their values, it would seem axiomatic that those values will need to be consistent with a set of shared values within the organisation. If not, the actions of the leader will be either inauthentic or inconsistent with the objectives of the organisation.

### ***Criticism of our leader training***

There are a range of criticisms of the Landmark Forum style of training. Very little of this criticism has been compiled in an academic form. The academic

publications are mainly in the psychological field and relate to instances of psychological disturbance following involvement in training. The Rick A Ross Institute of New Jersey runs a web based archive that contains documents related to “cults, destructive cults, controversial groups and movements” (Jersey 2013). The documents include academic references, media reports, and personal accounts. They include a comprehensive collection of documents related to the Landmark Forum including records of legal disputes between Landmark Education and the Rick A Ross Institute concerning damage to the business of Landmark Education caused by the Institutes activities.

Criticisms included in the archive of documents range from psychological harm to complaints about the organisation’s sales methods. Of relevance to our use of an ‘experiential training’ program are the suggestions of psychological damage and the accusations of mass psychological manipulation. While we had no reported instances of psychological harm caused by the training, there were participants who responded negatively and emotionally to the training methods. Some comments were similar to complaints from the broader group of Landmark Forum attendees of cult like language and aggressive responses to perceived resistance to training.

Having read through the comments of training participants and compared them to comments from our company wide staff surveys, there is a consistent set of responses that indicate active resistance to the idea of a corporate culture. This raises an important issue for leader training: ‘why are we training leaders?’. The key criticism of the Landmark forum, other Large Group Awareness Training (LGAT) organisations, and by extension other ‘experiential’ training techniques, is the balance between coercive influence and the participants freewill. It is not a large leap of logic to suggest that all organisational influence programs, including encouragement of ‘leadership’, are subject to the same criticism.

This brings us back to the application of Hacking’s additional criteria to leadership as a social construction: is leadership bad and should it be done away with or at least radically reformed. By placing the criticisms of LGAT

methods beside our expected outcomes in training a leadership cohort we have to ask whether our people, both the trained leaders and the people with whom they interacted, were adequately prepared to deal with the implicit ethical issues of a 'leadership culture'. The answer is necessarily no, not because that is what we intended but because it wasn't something for which we planned.

However, there is a broader critical assessment that in itself contains an essential irony. The criticisms of the LGAT approach to leadership training are based on negative views of the means used to influence individuals. These same criticisms could be equally leveled at leadership itself. If resistance is essential to leadership and an essential part of leadership is influence to overcome resistance, then the same criticisms applied to LGAT training could also be applied to leadership. There is no way out of this dilemma and the only valid form of assessment of the problem is critical inquiry to uncover the forms of power applied through the training and through leadership.

A more fundamental objection to the LGAT approach is the focus on the individual. If leadership is a social phenomenon then changing the individual changes only one part of the context of leadership. Certainly this was my observation after talking with people who undertook the training. Changing the individual creates a situation where the individual has skills to deal with resistance, but my experience was that these skills were rarely enough to overcome the resistance of the existing organisation. An alternative development approach would deal with leadership in its context, by which I mean within the organisation in which leadership is to become an active principle.

## ***Chapter 7 Interpretation of my narratives***

Anne Cunliffe (2009a) expressed her thoughts about taking up a teaching role in a leadership course, asking herself what she as an academic researcher could say to senior managers with many years' experience about leading organisations. As a practicing manager writing a critical narrative about my experience I can ask the question in reverse: what does my experience say to leadership theory? This chapter moves from the analytical writing of the previous chapter to the work of interpreting my experience; from analytic writing to writing that is more oriented towards synthesis of my narratives of experience to reintegrate the divergent threads of the previous chapter.

Chang (2008, p. 127) argues that interpretation is about finding cultural meanings beyond the data presented. My research question asked about the existence of 'leadership'. My interpretive method is to deal with the three ideas I have been pursuing since the beginning of this work: the word, the phenomena, and the concept. Interpretation needs to bring these ideas together, to show how they are related. The narratives and analysis provided insights into the use of the word and the metaphorical structures revealed in its usage. The use of the word 'leadership' revealed in the narratives provided the context for interpreting how 'leadership' is understood as a concept. More difficult is the task of identifying the phenomenal manifestations that might be candidates for the phenomenon of 'leadership'.

I treat the word, the concept and the phenomena separately at first, and then I consider the word and the phenomena together before considering all three in relationship to each other. In each case I try to foreground my experience against a background of theory with the expectation that the counter-position of the two will show up particular resonance or dissonance.

### ***Dealing with phenomena***

In looking for a phenomenon of 'leadership,' or possibly a related set of phenomena, I want to 'grasp' leadership rather than 'think' it. To do this I revisit my narrative in a way that Simon Western describes as "looking awry"

(Western 2007, p. 14). In my narratives I described aspects that emerged from interviews and discussions, other published accounts, and my own experience. I hoped to create a situated, relational, and embodied perspective in these vignettes. The narratives however possibly create an unwarranted sense of certainty which to some degree are more or less dispelled in the analyses. The iterative process of reading and reflecting on these narratives provides a personal perspective that questions the contradiction and paradox inherent in multiple viewpoints. Rather than the certainty of the narratives, the reflections provide a voice that swings between certainty and doubt; it puzzles over itself and doubts itself as experience; and it asks as many questions as it answers. Through this chaotic aspect of my work, through contradictions and vagueness, I'm looking for some relief from the theory of 'leadership'. I'm searching for something that might help disclose the phenomenal essence of leadership.

### ***Improvisation as an analogy***

With reference back to the 'slipperiness' of leadership or its mirage like quality, I also want to identify 'shadows' around my experience that might be shown up by looking at broader analogies and ironies suggested by both my descriptions of leadership episodes and the work of leadership theorists.

One episode I described identified the improvisational aspect of Susan's leadership performance in the face of group resistance. Use of 'improvisation' to describe her performance leads to the discussion I started early about jazz improvisation as an analogy. I'm not the first person to use this analogy; there was a special edition of *Organisation Science* (Volume 9 No 5) dedicated to it. Other analogies, such as games, also work well (Bourdieu 1990, p. 66). In both cases I have my own direct experience which I can use to compare to my experience of organisational life.

As I stated earlier I prefer the analogy to jazz improvisation because it doesn't have the sometimes confusing relationship between physical 'field' and disciplinary 'field'. I find the visual image of the physical sporting field sometimes too direct. The analogy of improvisational music compares less graphically but possibly more accurately the relationship between the

performance spaces of improvisation and leadership, and certainly draws attention to leadership as a performance. It also provides a stronger suggestion of the possibility of an aesthetic creative component to 'leadership'.

The analogy of jazz improvisation works at multiple levels for organisational life. My own developing understanding of the relationship between managing and leading in organisational development aligns with my broad understanding of the history of jazz improvisation. Early forms of jazz improvisation developed within harmonic frameworks which were relatively fixed and rigid. The forms of jazz improvisation that developed in the 1950's radically modified the harmonic rules until the improvisation of people such as Ornette Coleman where the experience of playing and innovating took precedence over traditional views of a predetermined harmonic structure. I see an analogy here with how we can interpret an organisation, where the organisation is seen as the improvised composition that emerges from the responsive improvisation of individual players. Describing an organisation as emergent from the improvisation of its members within parallel emerging modal relationships starts to come close to the ideology of complex responsive processes of relating.

As Bordieu used the analogy of 'field' to describe the context of practice, the analogy of jazz improvisation replaces 'field' with the 'harmonic structure' of the emergent composition. This analogy provides some immediate insights. The relationship of the improvising soloist to the harmonic structure fits better the ideology of complex responsive processes because the notes played by the soloist can change the harmonic content of the song. Harmonic structure which is tight and rigid yields soloist's notes that can be considered 'right' or 'wrong' in relation to how they fit into the harmonic structure just as a rigid organisational culture can yield views about the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of a person's actions. An improvisational performance where all players are soloists can work if there is an agreed harmonic structure, but may also work where there is no pre-agreed harmonic structure but where the players are

listening to each other and sensing the changing patterning of the emergent harmonic structure.

The analogies flow easily from the jazz performance to the organisational context. A leader's performance may be considered dissonant if it goes against the organisational norms and a follower's performance can be considered dissonant if their resistance is seen as counter to the organisation's purpose. Susan's improvisational performance saw her adapt her performance as the mood of the room changed in the same way an improvising musician adapts his choice of note to the evolving harmonic structure of an improvised composition. It might be easy to jump to the conclusion that in this analogy the harmonic framework of the organisations is its culture as expressed through expectations based on rules, standards, power relations and so on. But we also need to look closely at the performance aspect of the improvisation that Susan demonstrated. This improvisation happened in the moment, and the words I used were that it was a response to the 'mood' in the room. The performance of the audience was expressed emotionally; their performance was both a spoken and embodied performance of their expectations. One critic may not have changed Susan's mind but just as a jazz musician senses the changing harmonic structure of a joint improvisation, Susan seemed to sense the changing mood of the audience as the other players in this joint composition changed their 'harmonic structure'.

There is a subtle analogous relationship between jazz improvisation and the story about Susan's performance in front of the management group. The note each player chooses in a joint improvisational performance determines the harmonic structure of each moment of an emerging composition. The notes chosen in the next moment may implicitly change the scale against which the composition is emerging and different choices can take the composition in different directions. If Susan had chosen to play 'dissonantly' she would have created a different future for the group of managers involved. The future of the group emerged in part from Susan's performance and in part from the resistance of the audience. Susan's performance included

aspects such as how she sensed the mood of the other players, her confidence in her next step, and the subsequent resolution of the joint 'composition' into a state of 'consonance'. For George, conversations were his form of improvised performance. But in order to improvise he needed thorough preparation. His ability to deal with the framing processes described by Carroll and Simpson and the movements between frames depended on how well prepared he was for the discussion. When discussion failed he reviewed and revisited.

The phenomenon of the practice of leading seems to have many characteristics that are similar to jazz improvisation. If we think of interpretive frames as the harmonic structure at a point in time, and the movement between frames as the melodic movement of the composition, we get a sense of what leaders are doing when they are performing. We also get a sense of how complex, continuous, and rich the composition of an organisation is as it emerges from the relatedness of its players.

It also opens up a new way of talking about how well some people perform in the complex responsive processes of relating. This aesthetic aspect of performance is why the narrative form of writing about leadership opens a new way of appreciating a leader's performance. While in retrospect we can analyze the frames and movement between frames to extract the sense making that occurs in episodes of leadership, it is only in experiencing a leader performing in real time that we can appreciate the creative and aesthetic aspects of what might be seen as phenomena associated with leadership.

### ***The concept of 'leadership'***

#### ***The two different perspectives on leadership***

I have mentioned two different perspectives on leadership: the entity and relational perspectives. The entity perspective can be seen as derived from an objective epistemology and a Cartesian separation of mind and body. In this view leadership involves leaders and followers as knowing subjects who treat others as objects. The relational perspective on the other hand sees

leadership and organisations as “human social constructions that emanate from the rich connections and interdependencies of organisations and their members” (Uhl-Bien 2006, p. 655). In this second perspective, knowledge is “socially constructed and socially distributed” and “organisational phenomena exist in interdependent relationships and intersubjective meaning” (Uhl-Bien 2006 p. 655).

The entity based leadership literature has an underlying assumption that leadership is either something that inheres to an individual or is attached to the way individuals relate to each other. From this perspective a search for evidence of leadership will be focused on the individual or the relationship between individuals. ‘Leadership’ for people who take an entity based approach will be contained in the traits, styles, or competencies with which they describe leadership including how leaders and followers interact. ‘Leadership’ will show up through the behaviours of individuals, including how they speak and hear and how they interact with others.

Taking a relational view of leadership we recognize that leadership is constituted in the relating of people. We can see the two perspectives of entity and relational leadership as a forced dualism or we can see them as two ways of looking at the same phenomena. From a complex responsive processes ideology there are both entities and relating inherent in organisational life and both contribute to the on-going creation of organisational reality. The ability of conceptual discussions to create binary opposition obscures the phenomena being experienced. Concepts are more or less useful in helping us interpret experience but will always be simply a model of the phenomena we experience. Just as we can construct many different models of the same physical reality, like map projects of the earth, we can have many models for the phenomena of leadership. Despite the extensive literature on leadership, the models we currently have for phenomena of leadership are at best useful and at their worst misleading.

The concepts of ‘analogy’ and ‘model’ are closely related. The simple extension of Bennis’s tripod of leadership to include the resistance of followers creates a simple model with rich analytical possibilities when

applied to people's stories about leadership. The use of frames and the movement between frames provides a dynamic model for analyzing the performance of leading as an emergent sense making composition. Watching the performance of leaders helps situate the contribution of entities to relating in terms of discursive activity and contribution of relating to entities in terms of identity construction.

### ***What leader training courses reveal***

It seems reasonable to expect that we could find description of leadership in the content of leadership development courses. Surely the content of these courses will lay out in a structured way both a theory of how leadership works and a detailed description of the phenomenon to which the word refers. There's no shortage of leadership training programs or books that explain how to be a leader. Carroll & Levy (2010) provide an overview of typologies of leadership development identifying three main approaches: the 'know how' or toolbox approach; the constructivist approach; and the constructionist approach. Recognizing that these approaches are not mutually exclusive, the course that we chose was predominantly constructivist in its focus on each individual becoming a better leader. While the course involved competencies similar to those that one might find in 'know how' oriented leadership development, the technologies were primarily technologies of self. More 'socially' oriented technologies such as conversations and listening were aimed at individual capability to pursue a leadership agenda.

The alternative constructionist perspective is relational and recognizes the individual's situatedness in the complex responsive processes of organisational unfolding. There is a paradox in that 'leadership' implies an active role in influencing organisational unfolding. If the future is immanent from the complex responsive process of organisational unfolding, the only possible role a leader can have is to be influential in affecting those processes at the micro level and to seek to have some control over what the contingent future might look like. It is clear that the leadership course we chose had a strong orientation towards training leaders who could influence

future states to improve organisational performance. Whether this is a feasible endeavor or not is a different question; on the basis of my experience I would say that it is likely not feasible.

As managers of the organisation we did not question that we knew why we needed more 'leadership' in the organisation. There was a direct linear logic in the assumption that more leadership would result in better performance. There was not direct discussion of the 'why' question: for what purpose are we training leaders? At the senior management level we had accepted the objectives implied in our relationship with shareholders: our objective was to increase the value of the shareholding. Our problem was that people at other levels had competing agendas, whether personal or professional. Leadership was a way of aligning organisational and personal agendas. This was the promise of the course chosen.

There are ethical problems in choosing to rebuild individual identities to produce "appropriate individuals" (Alvesson & Willmott 2002, p. 619). The 'deal' that people think they have signed up to when they join an organisation probably doesn't include being remolded to suit objectives determined by others. A simple materialistic view of the 'deal' might be expressed as 'a fair days work for a fair days pay'. Few organisations would reveal their intentions as starkly as having an objective of molding peoples' identity.

### ***The word 'leadership'***

#### ***Linking the word and the phenomena***

In accessing phenomena, Hass notes that we need to enact "a kind of vigilance about views, models, practices, and pedagogies" and seek to "uncover abstraction in them so that we don't become problematically invested in ontologically derivative notions" (Hass 2008, pp. 166-7). A basic question when seeking to describe the phenomenon of leadership is whether it is possible to experience a concept, that is something that is described as an abstraction. For me this has become a central concern, a concern that requires that I unravel the abstraction of the word 'leadership'.

There is a danger in separating leadership from its context, in seeing it as a part in relation to a whole. Sokolowski describes different types of parts: independent parts ('pieces') and dependent parts ('moments'); different relationships between parts: founded (vision is founded on the eye) and founding parts (the eye founds or supports vision); and the way in which parts can be experienced: as concretum or abstracta. A whole or a piece can be experienced independently as a concrete thing. Moments can only be experienced as "blended with their complementary parts" (Sokolowski 2000, pp. 317-21). When we take the word leadership away from its context we create the possibility of giving its abstractness a false concreteness. We create the possibility for questions that may not on reflection make sense; questions such as 'does leadership create the organisation or does the organisation create leadership?'.

Sokolowski's point is that when we take something that is a moment and separate it from its whole we create an artificial problem: the problem of leadership in this case. The solution is "to show that the part in question was a moment ... and that it never should have been separated from the whole in the first place" (Sokolowski 2000 pp.325-30). Put in simple terms we have the problem of reification of the abstract idea of leadership and its distancing from the phenomena of leadership.

This philosophical error (to separate moments from their wholes) is often repeated and Sokolowski provides some examples: the 'problem' of knowledge, the 'mind-brain' problem, and the separation of concepts (such as 'triangle' or 'cube') from their manifestations in nature. As Sokolowski notes "we let the abstractness of our speech mislead us into thinking that the thing we talk about could present itself concretely to us. We introduce a separation where we should simply make a distinction" (Sokolowski 2000: pp. 344-46).

With leadership, we can also let the 'abstractness of our speech' mislead us. In my interpretation, the ideology of complex responsive processes of relating seems to me to be an attempt to break the deeply rooted impression we have of our separateness from the people to whom we are connected.

But words always get in the way; they cut up wholes into parts and allow us to reify abstractions. We use words to explain away the separations we have created and in so doing we create new words and new separations. In our inquiry into leadership we must keep putting the moment of leading back into its contextual whole to limit the abstraction that occurs when we don't. A way to do this is to understand how abstractions in speech are derived from our experience of the physical world as I have done by identifying and highlighting the tropes we use to construct our way of talking about leadership.

### ***The word, phenomena and concept***

Alvesson & Spicer (2011, p. 205) suggest that we should have “more modest expectations of leaders” and that we should cease investing “all our hopes and dreams in leadership”, which would “rescue leadership from a kind of fantasy world and help us to understand it for what it is”, and this in turn would “help us to see leadership in the real world that is plagued by inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes”.

Having looked at the word and the phenomenon together we can compare them against the concept of 'leadership', a concept that is the subject of so much investigation and literature. In writing about my own experience of leadership in the organisation in which I have spent many years, I find particular resonance in Alvesson and Spicer's call to stop investing all our hopes and dreams in leadership, which I interpret as being the concepts of leadership.

Earlier I referenced Ford and Harding's description of the territory of leadership as involving concepts such as trust, honesty, legitimacy, authority, and authenticity. Many more characteristics of human relating could be added to this list. We have seen how leadership can be seen as having become a plastic word, one that adds a magical quality when combined with any of the characteristics that could be applied to leading in organisations. We can create powerful rhetorical combinations such as relational leadership, authentic leadership, value based leadership, and many more

conceivable combinations. In doing so we think we are describing something called 'leadership' when what we are actually doing is describing something that we see as important to the relations between leaders and followers in pursuing their purpose and resistance. Authenticity is important, honesty is important, having values and being able to articulate and commit to them is important. In short, reliance on others is important in the way in which we can see integrity as a positive factor in organizational performance. Without being able to rely on others, our ability to perform is diminished and the capability of our organisations to perform their intended functions is diminished. Alvesson and Spicer's call to stop treating 'leadership' as the magic ingredient of organisational success amounts to a call to stop using the abstraction of 'leadership' as a lazy way of describing the complex responsive processes of relating that are the phenomena that constitute and are constituted by social life in organisations.

While we continue to treat 'leadership' as a magic ingredient for organizational success the negative aspects of leadership fade into the background. The territory of leadership as described above in terms of concepts such as trust, honesty, legitimacy, authority, and authenticity can also be described in more negative terms. Distrust, dishonesty, illegitimacy, abuse of authority, and inauthenticity are part of the complex responsive processes of relating as much as their positive counterparts. The power to influence is part of our complex responsive processes and the positive and negative aspects of power relationships should be inherent in our understanding of leadership. The difficulty of implementing integrity as a positive concept is almost insurmountable and so the likelihood of any organisation operating in a state of complete integrity is almost nonexistent. The resistance to a leader's vision will always be present, but despite this only a small proportion of the leadership literature provides a critical analysis of leadership. My own experience indicates to me that the conceptualisation of leadership without a critical consideration of power is always flawed.

## ***Chapter 8 Conclusions***

In making sense of my research questions I've constructed a narrative that tells the story of my involvement in an attempt to build a leadership culture and my engagement with theory in trying to understand how that worked out. The purpose was to write an account that made sense to me and hopefully to others that read this narrative.

Having exposed our hopes and dreams for 'leadership' and having confessed to a seduction by 'leaderism' have I shown that leadership exists? I think I have but from my new perspective it looks very different to the way it did a few years ago, and indeed it is different to many other perspectives I've encountered. I presented leadership through my narrative in a granular way. By getting into the experience of managers aspiring to lead I looked at leadership from the inside out. I asked lots of question and whether I answered those questions will be revealed in others' readings of the story. Leadership is a fundamentally relational set of phenomena and its understanding will always be both personal and relational.

Leadership could be seen as an active organisational principle that creates many challenges: ethical, moral, power, communicative, and so on. In creating these challenges it is also the practices of leading that overcome them. Failure to deal with these challenges could also be described as a lack of leadership. More often than not, leadership will fail because the organisational context is complex and continually evolving. Our inability to cope with complex evolving contexts is often the limiting factor for leadership.

If leadership is plagued by inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes as Alvesson and Spicer (2011) suggest, how should we proceed? My narrative has presented a view of organisational life as necessarily paradoxical and complex. I see leadership as an active principle of relatedness between leaders and followers and their purposes and resistance. The performance within this space within organisations gives rise to many aspects of organisational life such as confusion, effectiveness, performance, and inefficiency.

I worried when I re-read my work that I had fallen into the trap I had identified in others' writing: that I had implicitly accepted the existence of leadership by using the word so often. But as I wrap up my narrative and I redefine what I mean by leadership as an active principle of complex processes of relating I can see more clearly the existence of leadership in its three forms: word, concept and phenomena.

### ***Success or otherwise***

It is now several years since the last of our leadership training courses was implemented. A lot has happened since then. The world economy suffered a significant fall in activity resulting first in a widespread financial crisis and now a deep fiscal crisis as Governments struggle with the budgetary effects of their economic responses to the financial crisis. Access to capital has been significantly curtailed during the last three years and this has changed many of our aspirations and operating conditions. Partly because of these dramatic external changes our leader training program was discontinued along with many other more or less discretionary items. We reduced staff and have subsequently sold parts of the business which we didn't consider part of our future. This period also saw significant changes to our management structure and team. Personally for many of those involved it has been a deeply challenging time as our aspirations dissolved and were replaced by more immediate concerns.

Despite these changed circumstances the need we identified for leaders remains. It is probably the case that in times of greater challenge there is a greater need for alignment of personal objectives with those of the collective. A fractured group will be more susceptible to changes in their environment.

Did the training we provided to our people help solve the problems we faced? For those who struggled to implement what they had learned, was their struggle a failure of the course or a matter of personal choice or capacity? These are the questions that drove the evaluation of the course that I've described in this narrative. There are no definitive answers to these questions. However, beyond these questions there is the issue of whether

leader development training created the 'leadership culture' to which we aspired, and the organisational performance improvements we anticipated. My simple answer is no.

### ***Strengths and weaknesses of the narrative approach***

One reason for adopting a narrative approach is the aesthetic aspect of leading that other forms of research cannot adequately describe. I relied on my narrative style to try to reproduce in stories some of the aesthetic character of leading. Through extended analogy to improvised performance I tried to highlight this aesthetic aspect of leader performance.

Writing about my experiences has been both rewarding and frustrating. Writing as a form of interpretation has helped me to access new ways of understanding my experiences and the circumstances within which they were generated. But no matter how many times I re-write stories that represent my experiences the stories never seem to capture the richness of experience. I set out to use tropes as an analytical means of access to the sense making function of my stories. I found that my use of metaphor in a creative sense was not comparable to the sense making of people involved in non-reflexive real time conversations. In the conversations I had with other training participants when I asked them a question that required some reflection their rate and certainty of speaking slowed down as they thought rather than performed.

My stories suffer from the same problem. When I became too focused on trying to analyze and explain the story it loses its aesthetic quality. I can now understand why some people prefer the more creative form of autoethnography over the analytical form.

However the analytical form of autoethnographic writing has the advantage of superimposing narrative episodes on a background of theoretical and empirical descriptions. Adding a critical component to my writing helped access the dimensions of freedom and power which are central to both the concept and phenomenon of leadership.

## ***Contribution***

My research questions reframed questions about the existence of leadership to ask about my experience of leadership as a word, a concept and a phenomenon. Access to one's own experience is problematic. I chose autoethnography as a form of research that allows practitioners with substantial experience in their field to record, interrogate, examine and analyze their experience.

The validity of an autoethnographic account lies in how it makes sense to me and also to you as the reader. The sense I make of my own account is different to the sense that more traditional academic research might look to uncover. My interest is not in generalizing my account but instead whether it accurately represents my work in critically examining my experience. Hopefully, from time to time it also resonates with the reader and encourages the reader to in turn reflect on their own experience. This is the research inversion that autoethnography sets out to achieve. It replaces the traditional view of research that generalizes multiple accounts of experience into theoretical responses with an approach that uses a single account of experience to generate multiple reflexive and critical responses. So the first contribution of all autoethnography, including my narrative, is the multiple reflexive and critical responses it encourages in readers.

I modeled my approach on the ideology and methods of the research program of the Complexity and Management Centre at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire. In lieu of a cohort of fellow researchers to help guide my critical inquiry, I developed a method of writing that reflexively and critically examined the assumptions on which my narrative is constructed. This narrative method allows me to engage with the artifacts of my experience, such as my correspondence with others, my recorded recollections, notes written during and after events, and various other documents. It also allowed me to engage extensively with theory as a background against which to examine the sense I've made of my experience. Autoethnography is a new form of narrative research and is not yet universally accepted as a valid form of research. The second contribution of

this research is the adaptation of autoethnography to a critical inquiry of my individual experience. In doing this I have provided an example of how others can use autoethnographic writing to access their own experience.

Autoethnography presents the possibility of meta-analysis of far deeper examinations of experience than provided by other forms of qualitative research. As such, the third contribution of this thesis is as a unique 'data point' for future meta-analysis of the experience of leadership. Combined with the first two contributions and the willingness of other experienced leaders to write in the autoethnographic form, this will provide the potential for other researchers to undertake meta-analysis of extensive narratives of leadership.

The contributions mentioned so far are methodological. The fourth contribution of this thesis is the answer to my research question. I framed my research question in terms of my experience of the word 'leadership' and its relationship to phenomena and concepts we associate with the word. I don't claim to have proven the existence of a phenomenon of leadership or to have provided a link between various theories of leadership and the phenomena we associate with leadership. Instead, my narrative has provided experiential evidence of the difficulty in reducing the way we relate to each other to a concept such as 'leadership'.

The fifth contribution of this thesis is ideological. I have described leadership as an active principle of the complex processes of relating. Our belief in the existence of 'leadership' influences our processes of relating. A negative or positive view of leadership will influence how we relate to each other. The active principle of the word 'leadership' is its plasticity, its ability to be moulded and to mould our understanding of what we are discussing when we talk about our processes of relating. The claim to understand the concept of 'leadership' is a powerful weapon in deciding who prevails with their view of the future. The power of the word itself is enough to change how we relate to each other. This identifies 'leadership' as a plastic word; it is a word that can influence its own conception and the phenomena with which it is associated.

The sixth contribution of this thesis is a contribution to the critical analysis of leadership. As far as can tell, this is the first critical autoethnography of leadership. Critical analysis within an ideology of the complex responsive processes of relating can only be undertaken through an analysis of personal experience. Every person's experience of power and freedom within an organizational context will be different. It is only through critical narratives of this experience that we will be able to appreciate how power and freedom influence and are influenced by the complex responsive processes of relating. My thesis provides a starting point for this type of research.

### ***Recommendations for further work***

More leaders need to write in a detailed and granular way about their experiences. In the complex world of organisations many descriptions of subjective experiences are required to continue to disclose the patterns and flows of leadership in its many forms and contexts. All descriptions of the experience of leadership add to the emerging field of leadership as practice.

The narrative form presents an in-depth examination of one person's experience. Hopefully my interpretation of this form of research into leadership will encourage other leaders with substantial experience to tell their story and so engage in this form of research to present their analysis and interpretation of their experience. Taken together such a set of narratives could be used by other academic researchers to apply other forms of qualitative research.

The narrative form has allowed me to largely ignore the ideological basis from which other authors write and to focus on the sense that their narrative makes. In other words all writing presents empirical material. This is an important aspect of working in organisations. While more traditional research requires ideological clarity, leaders need to develop skills in working in ideologically pluralistic contexts and develop ways to help others make sense of such contexts.

The form of autoethnography I have demonstrated in this narrative provides a way for leaders to become deeply involved in leadership research. As a

research method, autoethnography provides a way for leaders as researchers to engage with ideologically pluralistic contexts. This provides a way for leaders to become aware of their own assumptions and the working ideologies around them. Through this I hope to have shown one way in which leaders as researchers can make sense of their leadership practices.

## *Appendices*

***Appendix 1 - History of the organization***

### ***A history of the Company***

This history outlines events from 2001 to 2010, during which I held senior roles in a large publicly listed engineering organisation, referred to throughout this thesis as 'the Company'. The material used in this chapter was extracted from the Company's Annual Reports and other public documents.

I have spent over 20 years with the Company, during a period of rapid growth and change. For more than 15 years I have been a member of the top management decision making team. For the last 5 years I was responsible for corporate development and had oversight of acquisition processes and aspects of corporate strategy development and change management. This has provided me with direct experience of the challenges of senior managers as they provided leadership during a period of constant, rapid and far-reaching organizational change.

The purpose of this appendix is to provide context for the stories contained in the main body of this thesis. It contains a description of strategies, programs and initiatives launched by the Company's leaders and the outcomes, impacts and failures that occurred during the period under examination.

### ***Rapid growth: a strategy to acquire***

I rejoined the Company in 2001 after a year working in a state government department. The 2001 Annual Report summarized the state of the Company at that time. Having undertaken two acquisitions, one was seen as successful while the other had resulted in large losses. Combined with a downturn in the construction industry, the Company reported its first loss since being publicly listed. From this significant event, the ten years that followed emerged. Of these ten years, the period from 2002 to 2008 was a period of rapid growth, driven by two three-year strategic plans for the periods 2002 – 2005 and 2005 - 2008.

The first plan (2002-2005) was described in the 2003 Annual Report. It presented a new vision and mission. The vision was stated as "To improve the lives of world communities" and the mission as "To enhance the social and physical infrastructure of the world by innovatively applying our intellectual

capital to produce sustainable project solutions”. Three year goals were also set, which aimed to: deliver shareholder value through capital growth and appropriate dividends; be a leading service provider to the physical and social infrastructure markets; expand the Company’s presence in the international community in a controlled manner; and to increase the Company’s share of specialist markets through a range of leading brand subsidiaries. These goals were backed by specific objectives: earnings growth of 15 to 20 percent per annum; fully franked dividends at 40 to 60 percent of earnings; a share price that reflects our performance and growth potential; and a pretax return on capital of at least 30 percent.

Significantly, the 2003 Annual Report announced that organic growth would be supplemented by “targeted acquisitions in the medium term” and that a clear priority for the Company was to “strengthen investor confidence in our management performance”. A significant change was envisioned where the MD would step away from his operational role in one of the subsidiaries to “devote his time to managing the growth and financial performance” of the parent company.

The 2005 Annual Report reported on the achievements under the 2002 to 2005 plan. The period saw a “significant rise in profit and earnings per share” and “notable capital growth”, with “a substantial increase in ...normal dividend”. It was reported that the Company had “delivered all of the key objectives it set itself”. As well, the Company had “...created a platform” for the future and had senior management had “invested considerable time and energy into strategic planning, making sure we have the right capabilities in the right markets, and the right emphasis on people and processes”. A particular mention was given to “people and leadership capabilities”.

The Company’s vision and mission were supplemented by a set of values, which were: (1) to provide outstanding service and performance; (2) conduct business with integrity and high ethical standards; (3) demonstrate that employees are the company’s most important resource; (4) advance the knowledge of the company’s industries; (5) undertake all activities with a view to enhancing the environment and its occupants in a sustainable manner; (6)

ensure high standards of corporate governance; and (7) efficiently manage funds entrusted to the company by clients and investors.

***A new strategy: going global with support systems***

The 2006 Annual Report described the growth outcomes from the 2002-2005 strategy as well as the elements of the new 2005-08 strategy. It noted that the Company “has delivered a record profit every year for the last four years” and that “2005–06 year heralds another milestone, with a 49 percent profit growth”. Revenue had increased to A\$251.9m with EBITA of A\$22.3m. During the year eight businesses had been acquired and were justified as being consistent with strategy by being “a specialist and a leader in their field” and that their work “in social or physical infrastructure plays an important role in helping us achieve our vision: to improve the lives of world communities”.

The scale of the change driven by the acquisitions resulted in a need to make significant changes to the way the company was organised and managed.

Some significant changes reported included:

- Realignment as specialist businesses around client groups or sectors;
- Rebranding of businesses under a single parent brand with a tag line referring to “extraordinary outcomes”, where extraordinary outcomes were seen as the result of people passionate that their “work has a positive impact on clients, shareholders, staff and the community”.
- Adoption of a new logo “to symbolise the union and the coming together” of businesses “into a harmonious unit”; while retaining a specific colour for branding each specialist business;
- A specific recognition of “the importance of technical knowledge, encouraging and supporting our staff to be leaders in their specialist area of expertise”; and
- A growing awareness of the global reach of the Company’s international development operations with the addition of Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Central Asia as significant operating locations, reflected through the establishment of regional hubs in the United Kingdom, Australia, the UAE, and the United States.

These changes were embedded in the 2005-2008 strategy which had a strong emphasis on providing additional support to the Company's people and investment in improved systems, while retaining a focus on growth by acquisition.

The 2007 Annual Report again provided a story of growth through acquisition (another eight companies) and improved business systems and support. This was the sixth consecutive year of increased profit. Revenue was A\$368.7m and EBITA was A\$32.2m. Group expenses increased 17% as part of the increase in corporate support to operations. The report summarised the strategy achievement in terms of "building a strong global consulting company, with a range of specialist services to meet the needs of the burgeoning global physical and social infrastructure markets" with each business being a market leader that "offers a specialised, knowledge-based service that is built on powerful client relationships". This growth was supported by investment in the Company's "brand and the development of systems, structures and processes, including a common technology platform" and a new financial system. To ensure future growth a "fully underwritten \$80 million rights issue" provided "an excellent position to continue our growth strategy".

During the 2007 financial year, further re-branding and merging of businesses took place. Staff numbers increased from 1,700 to 2,500. The in-house leadership program was launched providing "a further 25 staff with support to establish new habits of thinking and behaving", bringing to 43 the total number of people who had received "formal transformational leadership training".

The Company's achievements were attributed to "a sound business strategy, a willingness to invest in essential systems and corporate capability, and the commitment of our great people", which had "created the conditions for future profit growth". At that time, the market outlook was described as extremely favourable, with "investment in physical infrastructure expected to continue momentum".

### ***The global financial crisis***

The 2008 Annual Report revealed an increase in revenue from A\$363m to A\$559m, with NPAT lifting from around A\$9m to A\$16m. A new debt facility of A\$200 million was secured. Staff numbers grew from 2,200 to 4,200 with acquisitions in the United States, Canada and Brazil. The future was seen as positive, with resource, infrastructure and international development spending “forecast to remain strong globally for the foreseeable future”.

Despite early signs of worsening economic conditions it was believed that through its “long-term planning and diversification strategy, the Company International Limited is well-placed to weather the global financial crisis” due to the business operating in a “wide range of sectors and geographies and through the entire asset lifecycle, allowing us to adapt to market changes”.

In line with the 2005-2008 strategy there was a continuation of the focus on people and systems, including “ongoing leadership training, a dedicated learning and development function, a new health and safety program and creation of the Company Institute” as well as providing “continued investment in finance and systems, ensuring support systems keep up with rate of growth and expansion”.

Partly due to the signs of economic slowdown and partly due to the impacts of rapid growth, an overall program was required to create a single entity from the diverse components that had been assembled. This program, known by the acronym “PFG”, was “a business transformational program to align lifecycle, culture and market orientation”. PFG’s seven programs of work were intended “to drive short-term performance and long-term growth across all parts of company”. A consequence of the program was the development of a “new global management structure, with seven new executive positions, to help lead and support next phase of growth”.

The 2009 Annual Report described strong results “delivered in a challenging trading environment”. Revenue was A\$808.7 million with Operating EBITDA at \$56.0 million. It was reported that A\$10 million annualised cost savings had been achieved. Four small acquisitions were undertaken during the year.

The strategy of geographic and sector diversification had allowed the Company to “deliver record results during the economic boom conditions while also providing “a comfortable cushion for the company as the global liquidity crisis hit in mid 2007”. An extended narrative on the benefits of service line and regional diversification was provided.

The transformation program continued with a focus on “unifying our people globally, which has significantly improved collaboration across the Company’s businesses and regions and aligned our staff with our vision, values and behaviours”. The 18 months of the transformation program were described as “intense” but the impact was “to solidify our culture and continue development of our strong customer orientation”.

A new strategy was developed for 2009-2012, along with a new global management structure to “to maintain a focus on our specialist services, support our staff at a regional level, increase our focus and delivery in key sectors and to enhance the delivery of our services to clients”. The new strategy was called “Launching Global <brand>”, and consisted of a number of embedded strategies to (1) create innovative and cross-business service offerings, (2) improve levels of client satisfaction through a managed program, (3) maximise regional presence through increased local support, and create more efficiency to enhance profitability.

The new structure was a matrix with service line, regional and functional dimensions. A major shift away from growth by acquisition was signaled, and it was stated that the Company “will focus primarily on organic growth across the four regions we have now defined” and that the Company will utilise the “existing cash and debt facility to fund this growth”. The outcome was predicted as “double digit earnings per share growth ... over the next three years”..

Looking forward, the 2009 Annual Report suggested that the “Australian market is in the recovery cycle with business and consumer confidence improving, employment figures remaining stable, the consumer property market buoyant, and demand from China for resources strong” and that the “deep recession felt in the UK and US markets appears to be easing”

By the 2010 Annual Report the effects of the global financial crisis were acknowledged in that the “uncertain economic environment negatively impacted ... financial performance, resulting in a disappointing overall financial result for the Company and our Shareholders”. Consequently, the Company “implemented actions to improve fee revenue and operating performance, including increasing the investment in our business development capability and initiating a comprehensive procurement review to achieve overhead cost reductions” as well as “a business rightsizing plan across our Asia Pacific operations” which resulted in “one-off costs of \$3.9 million” and “cost savings of between \$12 and \$15 million per annum”. Net profit after tax was \$13.8 million, down 16% from the 2009 result of \$16.4 million.

The impact of the economic conditions deflated confidence. “Unexpected economic and political events and reduced access to lending” and “Governments worldwide ...spending with less vigour” were seen as resulting in “Investment ... frequently being deferred until future returns seem more certain”. However, the report stated that the Company will continue to execute the three-year strategic plan and to “focus on delivering the benefits and cost savings from the work undertaken on global systems and training”. The previous two years had “... built the essential platform for the Company to operate as a unified global professional services firm”.

***Appendix 2 - Description of the leader development program***

### ***An emphasis on leadership***

During 2001, the Company became involved in a major project alliance, the first in its history. As well as being a starting point for a string of future alliances, the first alliance was important because it introduced the Company to an approach to leadership that was to become a major part of its future. The approach was integrated into the methodology of the project alliance consultants (“the consultants”), and was seen by those involved as a significant factor in the success of the project alliance.

The Managing Director (MD) at that time wrote several articles and delivered a number of presentations on leadership and his experiences in learning about leadership and adapting his leadership style. The MD wrote that leaders should understand who they are themselves. From his own experience he had found that two of his behavioural characteristics served him well and not so well at the same time. He realized that he would have to move from his natural style of being the captain of the team, leading by example and making lots of decisions, to being the coach who was able to step back and create the space for others to play in.

In November 2003 a significant investment in leadership was considered. Following a management team meeting at which the topic of leadership training was discussed, I wrote a paper summarizing the availability of suitable training courses. Reading that paper almost 10 years later, I can see it as simplistic and naïve, but the basic question addressed was whether leaders can be trained and the conclusion was that they could. The paper also compared the content of leadership courses from two universities as well as courses provided by the Consultant.

In 2004 I wrote a specific proposal to provide training for four senior managers from one of the Company’s subsidiaries. The objectives of that training were to provide to the senior leadership group the capability to transform the Company. Picking up the language from the project alliances, we were seeking “transformational leadership” to take us to “new levels of performance”. After the training we expected the development of “a new common language” with

words and phrases such as “game breaking”, “beyond business as usual”, “mastery”, “disseminated leadership”, and “committed conversations”.

Between 2003 and 2008, the Company sponsored 67 employees to the leadership course, either in its longer external form or as a shorter internal course. This represented a significant investment in leadership and is indicative of the importance placed by the Company on leadership development.

### ***The foundations of the program***

When people returned from leadership training they brought back new concepts that over time become part of the way people in the Company came to describe leadership. At first the use of these new words and phrases seemed strange but in time they became part of Management’s way of talking. Some of the ideas that were introduced were:

- **Context:** Leaders must set the context that allows people to operate; less clarity in the description of the context allows more room for different interpretations;
- **Conversations:** Leadership is enacted through conversations, All that is needed to move an issue is the next conversation. There are types of conversation and each type is appropriate to its context;
- **Background Conversations:** Everything people say is translated by the listener; and the translation is determined by the listener’s pre-determined way of hearing what has been said;
- **Facts versus Interpretations:** We create “facts” to support our story, any “facts” are really our interpretations, when issues arise it is very powerful to separate the facts from the interpretations;
- **Self as Identity:** Who you are choosing to be is hard to disguise, your success strategies are built in, and there are things you routinely do despite continued poor outcomes;
- **Self as Possibility:** You can you become a ‘clearing’ these possibilities to occur, ‘conversations’ and new ways of being can facilitate these possibilities and create a new context;

- **Enrolment:** You need to enrol others to create possibilities, you have natural ways of being that convey your passion and excitement, and an audience will recognise real passion or lack of it;
- **Creating the Unpredictable:** Be expansive and unconstrained but don't set the bar at an impossible level, create a game worth playing to help enrol people, set the rules and define success, recognise and celebrate early successes that show that the unpredictable is possible, focus on what has been achieved not what hasn't.

As the provider of the Company's leadership program, the Consultant also provided the overall approach and philosophy of the program, along with the language described above. The Consultant's approach to leadership has a long history which is relevant to the way in which the language of leadership changed within the Company.

### ***Origins of the language and training approach***

The Consultant was one of a number of consulting firms that licensed methodologies from Transformational Technologies Inc and Mission Control LLC, both subsidiaries of Landmark Education. In a November 1987 Fortune magazine article, journalist Jeremy Main referred to a group of companies that had licensed methodologies from Transformational Technologies, who in turn had acquired the methodologies from earlier businesses of Werner Erhard, the developer of the Est large scale training methods. One of the companies mentioned was the Consultant, and the article referred to a founder of the Consultant who was one of the trainers in the leadership course I attended. He confirmed the heritage of the Consultant's leadership program as running back to Werner Erhard's Est programs, and also confirmed the similarity of the Consultant's program contents to those of other Erhard derived programs such as Landmark's Forum. There are a number of references that explain the principles underlying the training approach and methodologies. (Goss 1996; Scherr & Jensen 2007; Zaffron & Logan 2009).

There is an important context in the heritage of the leadership program and its underlying approach. Erhard's methodology and the organizations that run the large scale personal development programs have both been the subject of

continuing controversy for many years. The opponents of these programs have at times labeled them as cults and some have mounted campaigns to close the organizations and stop the delivery of the programs.

A relevant aspect of this controversy has been attempts to define what a cult is, with a number of definitions including components such as charismatic leadership, psychological commitment to a leader or organisation, willingness to contribute time and money. Early anti-cult efforts revolved around ideas such as brain washing and de-programming. As with the linkage of leadership and seduction (Calás & Smircich 1991) there is also a line of continuity from accepted leadership practice to unacceptable cultish practices. Similar ironies are recognizable in the derivation of the words 'cult' and 'culture', and again there is a continuous line from accepted to unacceptable. It seems to be the case that many of the criticisms directed at cults could be directed at organizations that pursue development of organizational culture through strong leadership. The continuity in these concepts requires ethical decisions as to where the dividing line is drawn between acceptable and unacceptable practices.

The circumstances of the leadership training applied in the Company during the period under inquiry require an examination of the content of the leadership programs and their theoretical and practical heritage. To do this I will now review the content of the leadership programs delivered and the published work of Erhard and several other key related authors, including assessments of the philosophical and psychological foundations of the approach.

An extensive discussion of the concepts behind the Forum training is included in McCarl et al (2001) and I will use this as an authoritative account of the philosophical basis of the program. The basis of the claim to be an authoritative account is that one of McCarl's co-authors, Steve Zaffron, has worked closely with the originator of the program's intellectual property and was at the time a senior Landmark executive (Landmark is the owner of the Forum training program).

McCarl describes the Forum in terms of the "practical art of uncovering and expanding self-knowledge and thereby generating unforeseen ways of being in

everyday life” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 51). This inquiry needs a coach or mentor “to guide us to recognize and acknowledge the limitations of our own multi-layered ignorance” (ibid), and thus the Forum is portrayed as “a contemporary experience of Socratic philosophy” (ibid), as “good theater”, with “a systematic and accessible integration of Eastern and Western philosophies” (ibid). This return to practical philosophy allows participants to “examine the human condition in a way that leads them to self-knowledge, to new levels of responsibility, and to reformed and revitalized commitments” (ibid).

McCarl et al’s (2001,p. 52) discussion of the philosophy underlying the Forum starts with a note about the language, in which words “are used rigorously but not necessarily with their ordinary, familiar meanings so as to present a set of related ‘distinctions’ that propel the process of inquiry.” This reflects the approach used by Heidegger in ‘Being and Time’ where neologisms play an important role in disclosing aspects hidden by the familiarity of daily use.

Some of the “distinctions” of the Forum are discussed in detail including “possibility, story/interpretation, authenticity-inauthenticity, empty and meaningless, transformation, language and being, integrity, and even the word distinction itself” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 52). The emphasis of the distinctions “is on living by the insights” they provide (ibid). McCarl et al specifically address this principle as “the art of ‘distinguishing’ which is “the act by which something hitherto not even noticed, let alone known, is called into being with appropriate language” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 53).

This is described further in terms of “a practical insight into what Heidegger calls ‘thrownness’” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 52), which in turn is seen as a starting point for personal transformation, such that “In the act of distinguishing our ways of being, and seeing them as such, we crack open our ‘thrown’ or already given humanity”.

Starting with these central concepts McCarl et al expand on several related ‘distinctions’ in terms of some of the practices of transformation:

- *'Possibility'*: Possibility is “used in a way reminiscent of Heidegger, as a clearing for a new way of being” and is “distinguished as a phenomenon occurring now in present time, not in the future” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 53) In this way, possibility is seen as something that can be experienced.
- *'Story / Interpretation'*: “the building of stories and the forming of identity go hand in hand and go on and on without awareness” (ibid), but “you are *distinct* and thereby not simply reducible to the content of the story ... And so, in distinguishing *story* you also distinguish who you are — as the one who speaks and can say how things are, no longer simply a character contained inside habitual ways of telling about yourself”(ibid), which allows the story teller to “focus specifically on the difference between ‘what happened’ in their lives and their interpretation of ‘what happened’” (ibid). This perspective on story and interpretation places emphasis on humans as “meaning making machines” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 54). McCarl et al link this to the work of Berger and Luckmann (1967) in describing social construction, noting that “we live inside defined cultures and subcultures that have any number of fixed and accepted paradigms” which are “the already-given, taken-for-granted assumptions about which there is much agreement” which place us at “the mercy of our own cultures” and “in other words, humans create social realities and then literally forget that they created them”(McCarl et al 2001, p. 54).
- *'Self as The Transparent I'*: The concept of identity places the story teller both inside and outside the story. The ‘I’ is both the subject and author of the story, but the ‘I’ who authors the story “has no fixed or even identifiable characteristics” and is described as being “more like a ground of being” (ibid). This is referred to as the ‘transparent I’, and it is “the source of my experience” (Erhard, quoted in Bartley 1978). McCarl et al note that “Sociological and psychological treatments of the self recognize but do not usually elaborate on what we will now call the Transparent I” differentiating between the ‘I’ “which ... is spontaneous, undetermined and agentic” and the ‘me’ “which is socially constructed and determined—reflecting the process of regarding oneself as object and being so regarded by others” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 55). The focus of

epistemic approaches to self is almost always on the self as object, whereas the ontological approach to self focuses on the self as knower. McCarl et al identify this as a key concept for personal transformation which places emphasis on “transforming the enculturated, habitual tendency to identify oneself as ‘me’ so that ‘I’ emerge, free to be, act, and thrive” (ibid). While this approach borrows from “various wisdom traditions of East and West and in the philosophies of authors who have drawn on those traditions in their work ... the most familiar being Hegel, Heidegger, Buber, Wittgenstein” (ibid) it is important to note that McCarl et al are describing a set of practices not a body of knowledge.

- *‘Authenticity’*: Drawing on Charles Taylor’s view of authenticity as ‘being true to myself’, and speaking in terms of ‘myself’ as the “agentic transparent I”, authenticity is then seen in terms of one’s self “as a possibility free from undistinguished stories” with which one has unwittingly identified (ibid) The opposite is inauthenticity as the “failure to practice being the source of the stories and meanings by which one’s life is lived” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 56). The practices for authenticity include “taking responsibility... in the sense of recognizing oneself as the author or ‘source’ of one’s actions and ways of being, and therefore the one who is answerable for their consequences” (ibid). The act of acknowledging inauthenticity is a way of “redeeming the present from the grip of formerly undistinguished stories from their past” and is seen as an integral part of practising being authentic.
- *‘Empty and Meaningless’*: The existential paradoxical statement that ‘life is empty and meaningless’ is used to draw out the observation that life is ‘just the way it is’. Using awareness of the “human habit of unwittingly creating meanings that serve both to generate and justify the way we live our lives” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 56), the meaning making response to the phrase ‘life is empty and meaningless’ can be explored as “unrecognized interpretations” (ibid). The ‘nothingness’ of existentialism allows existence to “manifest itself simply, directly, as it is” while the “the possibility that life is empty and meaningless” and the realization “that there is no inherent meaning to that possibility” allows one to “invent new

meanings that leave one free to be responsible” which “entails knowing oneself as the author of those meanings” (ibid). This brings us to the concept of transformation defined in terms of possibility, which is “that clearing or space from which previously unimagined experiences and ways of being emerge” (ibid).

- *‘Language and Being’*: “Meaning making (social construction) is done through, and in language” (McCarl et al 2001, p. 57). As a central practice of transformation, declarative language is the means of ‘enrolling’ “key people and communities of people in recognizing ... possibilities as ‘really’ possible”. Heidegger’s often quoted phrase “language is the house of being” is explained as saying that language “provides the context in which being occurs” (ibid).
- *‘Integrity and Responsibility’*: Integrity is distinguished as “honoring one’s word as oneself” and declarations “carry weight only to the extent that I stand for and behind them”. In this way integrity and responsibility “feed on one another” (ibid).

A key element of the approach described by McCarl et al is the differentiation between awareness and reality:

forms of content—what appears in consciousness, what has been cognized—can be signs and aspects of reality, but not reality as the source of content ... (McCarl et al 2001, p. 58).

And this becomes the basis for a continual reflexive awareness of being and knowing as separate, and recognition that we are more than what we know:

To remain free and responsible I must not say I am this or I am that; I say only that “I am.” I thereby orient myself to primordial aliveness that in itself has no content, no form whatsoever. Yet inherent to this formless aliveness is the ability to cognize, to have contents of thought ... With this orientation I am ... one who loves knowledge, one who loves “being” in which the ongoing arising of content is welcome. Yet I know that I am not that content. ... possibility, and responsibility arise from being and being becomes available through self knowledge (McCarl et al 2001, p. 58).

Removing the emphasis on knowledge is essential to encourage a “willingness to be cause in the matter of one’s life” which is the “context of being, the context from which one can choose to live” (ibid). The derivation of such concepts is partly explained by McCarl et al’s description of underlying philosophical

concepts but Bartley (1978) also points to the influence of social psychologists such as Rogers and Maslow and the Zen teacher Alan Watts.

As part of the leadership training provided, the Consultant included an annotated supplementary reading list to participants in their leadership training which also provides insight into the underlying theoretical basis of their course. In this reading list there is a section titled "Theory and Philosophy". Referenced authors include de Bono (1999), Anderson (1992), Austin (1962), Bohm (1996), Frankl (1984), Hayakawa and Hayakawa (1990), Kuhn (1962), Leonard (1992), Pinker (1995), Rorty (1989), Searle (1995b), Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus (1999), and Winograd and Flores(1986).

The role of Fernando Flores, who worked with Erhard in developing the Forum, along with some of his key influences and associates, should also be noted. Flores completed a PhD at UC Berkeley entitled "Management and Communication in the Office of the Future" (Flores 1982) under the supervision of Terry Winograd. This brought him into contact with John Searle and Hubert Dreyfus which provided direct access to analytical philosophy, in particular Wittgenstein and Austen, and existential philosophy and phenomenology, in particular Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger. Flores' view on the nature of inquiry and knowledge is an important element of the practice orientation of the leadership training; he wrote:

Because of the modern tendency to identify knowledge with science, there is the temptation to dismiss such questions as irrelevant, or to attempt to locate them inside the domain secured by a scientific discipline. But perhaps the debate about these questions is not quite as sterile as the positivist legacy often leads us to suppose. Those who pose such questions do not remain unchanged; for better or worse, their understanding of themselves and the world is changed (Flores 1982).

It appears that Flores' deep understanding of Austen's speech act theory and his appreciation through Searle of the link to Wittgenstein's language games provided at least part of the language and social construction elements of Erhard's Forum, and this flowed through to the content of the Consultant's leadership program. In both the Forum and the Consultant's course there is a component that provides a practical approach to different types of

conversations, and the origin of this can be seen in the ideas published by Flores (Winograd & Flores 1986).

### ***The delivery of the leadership training***

The Landmark website provides a description of the educational methodology behind Landmark's programs (Landmark Education 2011). It describes these programs as "grounded in a model of transformative learning rather than informative learning", quoting Mezirow (2000) as a reference for transformative learning. The description of transformative learning is consistent with the elements of the programs described by McCarl et al, and is described as giving "people an awareness of the basic structures in which they know, think, and act in the world" resulting in a "fundamental shift that leaves people more fully in accord with their own possibilities and those of others", where this "shift is the single most powerful attribute of The Landmark Forum". The methodology "offers a practical technology for producing breakthroughs— achievements that are extraordinary, outside the limits of what's already predictable, attainable, or known".

The Landmark Forum is organised as a three-day intensive course while the Consultant's course was run over either three or four sessions of between three and five days, depending on whether the course was internal or external. All courses share a similar curriculum. The Landmark course curriculum is described on their internet site. The course sessions provide a compact description of the language elements introduced as "distinctions". The key session names and their descriptions are:

- **Already Always Listening™**: This session introduces the idea that our experience of the world is filtered through pre-existing ideas – such as upbringing, values, past experience.
- **The Hidden Power of Context**: "the hidden contexts from which we live determine what we see and what we don't see; what we consider and what we fail to notice; what we are able to do and what seems beyond our reach".
- **The Vicious Circle™**: "it is a human tendency to collapse what happened; with the story we tell about what happened" and "the story we tell

ourselves becomes the way it is”. “When we are able to separate what happened from our story or interpretation, we discover that much of what we considered already determined, given and fixed, may in fact not be that way”.

- Rackets™: “an unproductive way of being or acting that includes a complaint that something shouldn’t be the way it is” but that “there is a certain ... advantage or benefit we are receiving that reinforces the cycle of behavior” and “this way of being has steep costs, whether in our vitality, affinity, self-expression, or sense of fulfillment”.
- The Illusion of Someday: Presents possibility as a way of being and differentiates this from the view that possibility is a future state.
- The Myth of Is, Because, and I: The nature of an objective world is presented as a myth and our role in creating our reality is acknowledged. “it is human to construct such realities, and then forget that we are the ones who constructed them”
- Distinguishing: Opening New Worlds: “To distinguish something means to take something from an undifferentiated background and bring it to the foreground”.
- Freedom from Anxiety: “one of the primary obstacles to effectiveness is fear” and “our relationship to our anxieties and fears inadvertently gives them a life of their own”. Acknowledging this allows us to identify previously undisclosed barriers to action.
- How Identities Get Constructed: the “process began in childhood, as we gradually adopted ways of being and acting to deal successfully with things that didn’t quite go the way we thought they should” and by adulthood “we have assembled a set of practices and approaches, attributes and characteristics, that seem to give us a certain measure of success – that make up our personality, our style, who we consider ourselves to be”. In summary, our identities are determined by past experience.
- The Pervasive Influence of the Past: “a technology for putting the past where it belongs ...to design our lives as a free and authentic expression.”

- Change vs. Transformation: “change yields more, better, or different from what came before” while “Transformation ...is an act of bringing forth or inventing”
- Language as an Access to Power: “Language comes to be seen as a creative act” and “Listening and speaking become instruments of creation”.
- The Nature of Choice: Choice is presented as “a profoundly human ability to create” and we are able to “have a say .... about who we are and who we will be, as the author of our lives in any and all situations”.
- Dealing Powerfully with Breakdowns: “a technology for handling breakdowns” which are “something that we say shouldn’t be or something that stops us from achieving what we want to achieve”. The view is put that breakdowns are a pathway to fulfilling what’s possible and that we should “welcome breakdowns as an occasion for leadership and accomplishment”.

This description of the session names and their content is consistent with the theory presented by McCarl et al (2001) and consistent with the language that was brought back into the Company from the training.

***The language introduced to the Company from the leadership training***

As a working glossary of the language introduced to participants in the Company’s leadership training and sometimes used in the transcripts of interviews, the following descriptions are provided:

**Rackets:** Recurring complaints in tandem with a "way of being" that allow persons to justify themselves and their point of view but which can rob them of opportunities for satisfaction and joy; preconceived notions of why one is right and others are wrong.

**Success strategy:** Ways of being originating in one’s past that may have worked repeatedly in the past but that may obstruct more effective approaches.

**Taking a stand:** Putting attention on a vision for the future that gives us self-expression

**Breakthrough:** Abandoning old habits and embracing a new way of being; looking at things from a different perspective, getting a new understanding of life.

**Possibility:** A phenomenon that exists in and impacts the present (as distinct from the regular usage of possibility meaning "something that perhaps might happen in the future").

**Enrolment:** essentially having (or creating) a conversation in which you move, touch or inspire someone by causing a new possibility to be present.

**Transforming through language:** Zaffron and Logan (2009) describe an updated view of how the Est mode of thinking about leadership has evolved. They describe a meeting in 2003 in Barbados where a group of a dozen people met to analyze cases where "results of enterprise-wide transformation efforts surpassed expectations, were repeatable, scalable, had sticking power, and left people ... inspired and energized" (Zaffron and Logan 2009, p. 5). The group concluded that human performance is "one of the most powerful and least understood factors in determining an organisation's success" but that "with the current toolbox ... no matter what top leaders do ... the company's future will be a lot like what happened before (Zaffron and Logan 2009, p. 6). Their findings, summarised as three laws, were that:

1. People's actions correlate with the way the world "occurs" for them.
2. How the world occurs arises in language.
3. The generative use of language transforms how the world occurs.

**Integrity:** This was a newer concept introduced later than the other concepts (Erhard, Jensen & Zaffron 2009). It can be described as an articulated schema, as follows:

- Integrity for a person is honouring one's word
- Honouring one's word means keeping one's word and when that is impossible, to deal with the consequences
- One's word is:
  - 'what you said';

- 'what you know';
- 'what is expected' (conforming to expectations unless explicitly rejected)
- 'what you say is so' (being willing to be held accountable that your evidence for what you have asserted will also validate the same assertion for others)
- 'what you say you stand for': (what you stand for, as well as what you hold yourself out to others as standing for)
- 'moral, ethical and legal standards': (what one is expected to do unless one has (i) explicitly and publicly expressed an intention to not keep one or more of these standards, and (ii) one is willing to bear the costs of refusing to conform to these standards).

***Appendix 3 - Interview transcripts***

**Interviewee: John**

	<b>Content</b>
1	<i>OK so the first thing that I wanted to talk about was what you remember from your leadership training course</i>
2	The LTF course?
3	<i>Yes correct</i>
4	The first thing that comes to mind is is probably the similarity it has in to all the alliance projects and things we've been working on and the approach that's been used in that. So the clarity of declaring an outcome and then and then moving towards that. The other thing is the ah you know conversations and the way in which you approach the spectrum of conversations you know conversations about possibilities and all the various conversations you can have and conversations for closure and those sorts of things ... there's a lot of other things from a personal perspective... you have a way of being that's your success strategy that you tend to use and rely on and that's kind of inherent in where you are .. it's a state of being. (uh hum) um and then .. but you can also create a new being .. a new clearing for yourself that allows you to move into that space and um do things that you wouldn't normally necessarily do in other words it does change behaviour um so that you can achieve certain outcomes. In other words if you do the same thing over and over and over again you'll end up with the same outcome but if you do something a little differently then you can achieve something that is different.
5	<i>yep, and so what else about the experience</i>
6	the experience was .. well the actual course .. being in a course with lot's of external staff ... in other words external to [company name] .. was quite good. There were at the time I did it, there were nine I think [company name] people that did the course um and then there were a number of other people.. um guys from .. one guy from [other company], a couple of guys from [other company], another guy from um ah [other company], .. a whole variety of people, and they brought different um different experiences and different things to the course which allowed you to ah I think take a little bit more away. Um .. I think generally speaking from a personal perspective um it was an awakening .. I mean by learning about yourself allows you to ah understand what you .. what you don't do (yep) and what you do do and and where you can take yourself .. for me personally I think that that's really helped me in doing my role over the last um last few years .. so..
7	<i>and that was what I wanted to talk about next was actually how you had used that .. what you had learned from the course um in your work.</i>

	<b>Content</b>
8	<p>I think that the.. well as I said .. very similar to the alliances so a lot of my work has been associated with the alliances and being [alliance name], [alliance name], um now [alliance name], and [alliance name], um and the last two I've been sitting on the Leadership Team and that means you're setting, using some of those same concepts, not only for yourself and for [company name] but for the Alliance as well, of which [company name] achieves certain outcomes, so ..so I've been able to .. to use that in a positive way. um but I've used.. it's not just declarative outcomes, it's ah listening to people and understanding what the issues are and then being able to stand back and look at what are the possibilities and create a new clearing or a new area that you want to go to..um, and I find that quite powerful. Ah, it allows you to look back and see where it goes and I think that that helped me achieve certain things .. there was one year where I .. you know, we were not going to achieve budget and I just .. you know set a target of achieving it and I think we got to a 98 percent .. we didn't quite achieve it but it was a .. it was a fantastic outcome from where we were.</p>
9	<p><i>and so how did you .. to achieve that goal how did you use the .. um.. the learning from the leadership course to help you do that?</i></p>
10	<p>Well it's really a matter of analysing where you are, so looking at where you are and determining what the course of action is going to be so if you just keep going the way you're going you're going to end up at a particular point which wouldn't be acceptable .. well it was a less than desirable outcome I should say. So um by declaring that you're going to achieve a certain outcome um and and sharing that with the rest of the team.. the rest of the office managers and the office um that this is where we're going to and .. and then getting out there and driving that home um you .. and you know that means just being on the ball all the time, being responsive um which is some of the things that I probably wasn't being at the time .. and so applying those .. some of those concepts allowed me to um to help drive a good outcome. Um, but as a holistic thing.. it's really looking at using it all the time .. I do use it all the time and I catch myself using it all the time and have to keep stopping myself from using the lingo and just doing it .. do you understand what I mean? (yeah)</p>
11	<p><i>Yeah, so what are those times when you catch yourself using the lingo ... and why do you stop yourself doing that?</i></p>
12	<p>Well it's things like standing in a clearing .. creating a whole new clearing for yourself .. now can get . if if I started communicating that to someone then that doesn't really um tell them anything because they haven't done that course. OK. If they have done the course I can use the language and it's not a problem. But, it .. it.. it's kinda like you need to explain that we just want to go over there and this is what we want to achieve, so you can paint a clearing in a different way but not use</p>

	<b>Content</b>
	the language that's associated with the course.
13	<i>So it's a matter of understanding the concepts but also being able to .. act that way or behave that way and to get others to behave that way.</i>
14	Sure .. and so when you just want to talk about possibilities and not jump to conclusions you have conversations ... or.. or .. or just let the conversation go, but .. but stop people from jumping to conclusions, saying let's not solve this here .. let's just look at what are the options and get all those down and then look at where we might be able to go further at a later stage. So, let's get all the ideas down first and um rather than talk.. saying this is just a conversation about possibilities.. do follow what I mean? (um) so... personally I found it very powerful so ..
15	So, what other instances can you think of where you've um used what you've learned in the work context um and um really felt that it was something that you wouldn't have done before?
16	Um.. I think in ah I found that the ..when we were negotiating the commercial framework for .. for [project], which is the first time I'd got myself into that um I felt rather stressed, it was probably one of the most stressful days I've had in my life and um because I knew that it was such a big project .. I mean it was millions of dollars worth of work .. um and you're negotiating multipliers which are only a couple of numbers but those couple of numbers mean a big .. there, there significant outcomes for the business as a whole, and it's really just .. I was the only representative there for [company] and you know I certainly had ... um, I could of called [name] up or whatever, but you know he wasn't there so you've gotta just .. you've just got to do it, and .. and I guess the .. um .. the commitment .. and pushing yourself beyond where I don't think I would have been comfortable being in .. in .. if I hadn't done that sort of course.
17	<i>and so that was part of the personal development aspect of the course?</i>
18	yes .. yes..
19	<i>so what characteristics do you think gained from the course that allowed you to .. to handle that situation well.</i>
20	um. listening. um, really listening to what the outcomes are .. understanding what the .. the um I've always understood what the clients position is but really trying to think what is in the background of the conversation of the people around the table .. um and by concentrating on .. on what they were thinking and what outcome they were trying to achieve um really helped me to focus on what I needed to .. to make happen. Does that make sense to you? (yes, it does.. that's good)

	<b>Content</b>
21	<i>so the other are I wanted to talk about was um in coming back into your work environment with these new .. this new confidence and tools (yes) what barriers did you face .. what constraints did you find that the organisation around you imposed that you had to over come?</i>
22	um ..yeah, that's interesting.. I hadn't really thought of it from that perspective. um (pause) I think that [name] has always .. allowed space for people like myself to .. to move into that and apply that knowledge.. I think that there's .. having said that, there were other people who I reported through and to who, even though they had done the course, weren't living the course if you know what I mean. and .. and um.. that was constraining. so you could see where possibilities .. somethings would take .. where you .. you could take the leadership learnings and really put them to good use and yet you're being constrained by other people, applying it in a slightly different way. and not necessarily getting great outcomes.
23	<i>so how were people not living the.. the course.</i>
24	um.. well I used to report to um [name] who reported to [name] and they would often get themselves into .. into loops of how they're going .. do you know what I mean (ah ha). So, um .. and that was just frustrating.. and despite the conversations that you had .. um .. that would never get resolved.. so, it is interesting that it doesn't work in every case .. or it doesn't necessarily get applied by everybody .. in the same way.
25	<i>so.. so when you say that they got into loops what do you think that they weren't doing to get out of those loops?</i>
26	I seem to recall somewhere in the course it says um something like "generate don't wait" ..just get on with it .. make a decision and move forward, and things were not acted on, decisions were not made and it frustrated and slowed a lot of the process. It's an observation of mine [name of interviewer]. (yeah)
27	<i>(Yeah, I think it's important that ah it sound like you expected people who had done the course to behave in a certain way and they didn't) .. that's probably true. And there were other examples of people like [name] who ... who took it .. you know probably .. picked up more than .. applied it more than anybody else .. (mm) ..and really took it to .. you know ..set a goal of .. I want an office in .. overseas and then went and got that and he's moved on to the next bit.</i>
28	<i>So what would you say are the best examples of leadership that you've seen ah in .. around you at the moment?</i>
29	I would say would be a pretty big example. [name] seems to be ah

	<b>Content</b>
	<p>doing a great job in terms of going out and winning work and .. and .. and when I say that it's not just winning work, it's acquiring businesses, it's not being um .. it's being so positive that you know that you can go and win the work .. do you understand what I mean? (yep) so you actually go out there and you actually believe that there's so much self belief that it's going to change. (yep) OK. I walk around the office here and I nearly always are smiling and happy around the office because I believe that it .. it brings a positive attitude to not only myself but but other people around me.. and that's despite the fact that sometimes you .. you're well and truly burried under a lot of things to do.. sometimes that you don;t want to do. but you know they've got to be done, so um that sort of being I think provides good leadership around the place. Um, acting on things, I think you know the style that [name] has is very different from the style that [name] and [name] had you know the decisions happen so fast that sometimes you wonder did he even listen but you know he listens .. he acts on those things.. and I think that's been very good. um [name]'s leadership's always been pretty consistent with the .. with what I aspire to .. I mean it's very much along the lines of this LTF and the alliance style leadership .. um and they're pretty one .. well the ones I've been in contact with the most (yep)</p>
30	<p><i>so what do you think then the worst failures of leadership might have been that you've experienced?</i>  Worst failures, what you mean before LTF or after LTF or ..  <i>(Uh, you know either..)</i>  Either.. either. the worst ones.. ah probably well the issue between [name] and [name] would probably be one of those (ah hah). I think when I first .. first joined the company we had a divisional structure and some of the leadership provided by [name] I didn't really appreciate. But having said that he developed and changed and I think that the LTF program changed [name] in himself as well.. um, and I saw his leadership style change considerably .. I don't know whether that was because of his position or his role or whatever.. um, changing. Um, I think that the um some of the leadership in the [part of business] is .. is found wanting you know .. I don't think [name] probably stepped up to um to follow on from .. from [name] .. I mean I think that [name]'s ... [name] was a good leader .. he was a very good listener .. he would always know when he was out of his depth and you know confer with others to .. to work out the best way forward. Um, good examples of leadership? Ah, I think there's been a number of examples where guys like [name], here in Sydney, and myself and a few others have got together and just regardless of whether it benefits yourself or not or your business unit, you're really working together across business units and I think that's a good ..um, certainly good demonstration of leadership .. ah. an example of that would be just trying to help out the [part of business] guys who are based here in [office name] um even though they weren't part of [division] any more</p>

	<b>Content</b>
	.. they were part of , you know, [division].
31	<i>and as a last question um what goals are you now setting yourself in terms of leadership?</i>
32	Um, I... the first goal I've got is to make sure that there's more leaders coming through in the business units within [division] um I notice there is not a lot of .. ah.. our professional staff who are putting their hand up to take on the large office manager roles and business unit manager roles, and I think that we need to really develop a lot of leadership and management skills within our .. our staff. um, aside from .. you know, [division] being the best specialist [divisional skill area] consultancy in .. you know, in [country] and supporting the other countries ah in achieving the same goal.
33	<i>and from a personal point of view.</i>
34	from a personal point of view? My goal is to .. well I'm enjoying doing what I'm doing. It's a new role for me so um looking after a country is a good role... er ... good challenge in itself for the moment and um I think achieving our targets this year will be ... will be a good outcome .. um achieving our targets the following year I think will be extremely challenging given the global crisis you know global situation and um but I think my personal goal is to make sure that we retain all of our staff ... develop our staff so that we're stronger going forward .. I'd like to continue being involved in alliances and um I certainly would be keen to deliver you know extraordinary outcomes through the efforts of our staff involved in those alliances
35	<i>OK, well that's good. Thanks for that, that's the end.</i>

**Interviewee: George**

	<b>Content</b>
1	<i>OK the first question I'd like to ask is about the leadership training you may have done, and what you learned from it and what the experience was like.</i>
2	Right, sorry am I supposed to answer now
3	Yes
4	Um so the leadership training I had was [name of course] ..ahh. .sponsored by [the Company].. um, I forgot when it was .. 2004 or something like that. Um, what did I learn from it ...um I think to be .. well, the most fundamental thing I learned was um it sounds a bit silly but I could be a leader and I should be a leader. Something which hadn't really crossed my mind in my long career. and that being a leader is part of my job.. part of my role.and there are ways in which I can learn to be a better leader. I also learned that a lot of the leadership comes from owning up to my own responsibilities to make changes and to make changes to myself primarily and through that to affect other people that um. That was I suppose a reflection on what I do as a person day to day and how what I do as a person impacts other people knowingly or unknowingly. Um,for me it was quite liberating because I realised .. well ..to be a better leader I just have to change myself it seems obvious but it wasn't obvious at that time and um and by changing it I will actually have an impact on other people which will lead on to the results of leadership. Third question?
5	<i>No, I just wanted to explore that idea about it being liberating. What was it liberating you from?</i>
6	Well it certainly liberated me from having to wait on anybody else. Um, I don't need anybody else's approval to be the person I want to be. I don't need to particularly change somebody else .. I don't have to wait on somebody else to change. my manager or peers or anybody. Or the organisation, I could start to change myself, there are fairly structure ways in which I could change myself, almost like exercises, physical exercises. Um, and I .. and I could work out my program from those exercises by um asking for and listening to feedback and accept the feedback as absolute truth regardless of who said it. Um, there was a mechanism which essentially suited my temperament and on control of my own destiny and I could see that the more I put into it the more I'll get out of it. and that the leadership was not for the privileged few um but um it was applicable just to everybody else ... before running off and telling everybody else what they could do I had to do something on my own
7	<i>So were the exercises an integral part of the change that you went</i>

	<b>Content</b>
	<i>through?</i>
8	I think so. I think.. I think forcing myself to do the exercises changed me and that change made me do different types of exercises.I became more accepting of the need for exercises. I think the most .. the hardest exercise was accepting feedback .. unquestioningly and uncontestingly I've not ever been good at accepting feedback or listening to feedback so that for me was big . I still I suspect I still don't listen to all the feedback but definitely a lot more than I used to.
9	<i>What .. um what changed in you do you think that allowed you to accept feedback?</i>
10	What changed in me.....um, that's a difficult one actually. I know something did change. I think at this stage I can only say that um that I was looking for ...sorry...there was um .. I suppose what changed for me was that um the realisation that there's nothing better to improve me ... there was not going to be a way anything else but feedback that was really ... ah I suppose just accept it .. it was just a fact of life.. I have to accept it as my marks..and perhaps what helped me at that stage was just seeing how other people in the leadership group sometimes didn't listen to feedback and how . and other people listened to feedback and it was just watching other respected people going through that process.. it was difficult process of taking feedback when they least expected .. ah you know the type of feedback they got you know other people were big enough they took the feedback and they changed so if they can I can so it was just watching other people do it I think more perhaps than anything else in that group setting of that four weeks residential course.
11	<i>So you mentioned that um you could accept the feedback as absolute truth, what did you mean by that?</i>
12	That really meant that whichever source it came from I would not discount it. Whether it's from family, children, people I don't get along with, people I get along with, it wasn't certainly the case before I went into the leadership course I would be very biased towards feedback I think.. I would look for good things which I hear on the feedback and perhaps not at all worry about the bad things or what I saw as b ad things and then I began to realise through the course that those bad things I really need to be looking for and that they are precious so you start looking for them and you start hunting for them. And the feedback that still doesn't make it very nice but you certainly start to make use of that ammunition.
13	<i>So if you receive some feedback from many sources and it was conflicting how do you go about resolving those things?</i>

	<b>Content</b>
14	<p>Actually that's interesting ... you need to get ah conflicting feedbacks um I don't know if I've had problems resolving them .. I understood that I wasn't the same for everybody ... that I behaved in different ways for different people and therefore some of the feedback would be different from person to person but I also understood that I behaved in .... the same way regardless of who I'm dealing with but I have to sometimes dig deeper into my behaviour in certain circumstances and in other circumstances it (resolves) very much to the surface. So I sort of started realising that certain feedback was inherent of my behaviour and other feedback was on what people saw at that time so it could perhaps distinguish between different levels of feedback and all of them are true but it was what I was predicting at that given time.</p>
15	<p><i>Yea, you mentioned reflecting on what you do as a person... other than the feedback was there any other ways in which you did that.</i></p>
16	<p>Um... certainly ..certainly during the course and immediately afterward I used to write quite a bit about my experiences ... um .. perhaps not every day. I used to sit around and think about ... why did that happen ... how did that happen and um and I used to deliberately change my attitude towards people um to make sure that my usual attitude ... I mean I'd make a 180 degree change of attitude toward one particular person to see whether I can actually get to a better point. In fact this morning I was doing that there was a discussion to be had and um so I was um I was .... reflecting by doing some of the exercises from the leadership thing .. the leadership course asked me to do ... and then working out ... did it make a difference to me and I found it did make a difference so I suppose doing and (laughing) did it happen..again ...it was not always it was intermittent and it was not consistent but I think it certainly started to make a difference and I have to say when they did compliment on some changes it encouraged me a lot to reflect a bit more ... it just .... it's supportive.</p>
17	<p><i>OK. Um you mentioned just then about ... ah thinking about what has been said by changing or examining your attitude towards the person</i></p>
18	<p>Uh huh</p>
19	<p><i>...is that something you do a lot?</i></p>
20	<p>Probably not .. I don't do it a lot. But I do when I .. I have noticed now that I do it when I know that generally I have a very strong opinion about a person usually on the adverse side. Perhaps I should do it when I'm more positive towards them too ... but certainly .. just think about the teleconference this morning I had an adverse feeling about the person but I actually spent half an hour thinking more</p>

	<b>Content</b>
	positively about that person and putting the best possible spin I had .. and I have to say it was a much better conversation than I thought it would get to ... you know.. eh ..it was reinforcing the positive side of that person. Much more open to that person's comments. (breathes out) but I would say once a month (laughs) but it doesn't happen everyday..
21	<i>Yeah.. what other exercises um do you feel changed the way you acted...</i>
22	Um ... I mean fundamentally that leadership course was the issue of conversation .. something which perhaps now seems so obvious but was such a ..... such a difficult thing when we started. Um and such a difficult thing to realise that throughout the history of .... people have been doing this and we just didn't understand it ... the power of conversation....and structuring the conversation either .. you know .. the related um all the sort of conversations we are supposed to have. Um I. I. I definitely gained a lot from deciding before meetings and challenging people before meetings what sort of conversation we were going to have with a client or or an internal partner... It makes a lot of difference um . ah . it .. certainly to the outcomes I was getting out of it ... um (breathes out) Sitting and thinking about the conversations we were going to have sometimes I'd spend half and hour or one hour thinking about a conversation I'm going to have with somebody later on that morning.. certainly has been very positive and people have complimented on it and so I know it works ... sad part is there are a lot of conversations ... when I don't do that..and later you think I should have done that..but you don't.
23	<i>So why is it that sometimes .. um .. you have conversations that aren't satisfactory um because you haven't thought about it in advance..</i>
24	Um... very good question because um you tend to respond to ... I was reading something about it the other day ... eh, about um questions .. questions on the run.. You tend to respond to circumstances without .... to yourself um and you .. respond before you set yourself up for that situation um so and sometimes um people offer an opinion and something which is an indirect question in itself and you fall into the trap of answering that without ... or getting into that conversation without fully preparing and for myself I do need to prepare a lot better ... I need to have a bit of preparation time so I can have the conversation .. so .. um I'm quite clear at home when you do that you're not prepared at all half the time so you later on realise that you should have thought about it a bit better before I opened my mouth. Um but in business circumstances certainly when you are busy or .. you're on a good run you tend not to reflect so much on the power of the conversation and the value of the conversation and tend just to just to go on with the old instinct .. it's just old instincts coming up

	<b>Content</b>
	again..
25	<i>So can you recover from that if you have a conversation that you feel has been unsatisfactory . how do you go about recovering from that?</i>
26	Um absolutely ... one of the things that the leadership course included was ... just stop digging the hole. you know you've made a mistake you just have to go back and apologise or say can we have that conversation again ... or um do something..or realise that you've actually stuffed that up.. there's no recovery to that point ... certainly from my point of view ... but usually there's a way or acknowledging ... and I think that's another thing from the leadership course was very helpful in doing it was just that reflection which comes perhaps a half an hour later or one one day later. I do take action on it now. Say, well I didn't actually handle that particularly well so go back to that and um but, be better prepared .. ah, I mean the thing I did take a lot out from <name>'s message at the PFG conference was you don't always have to have the conversation. you have the conversation when you are ready and so .. yeah it acknowledge actually there's been a failure in the conversation... I don't think I ever used to do that before.
27	<i>but sometimes you have to have the conversation at the time?</i>
28	Yes.
29	<i>So how do you cope with that?</i>
30	I don't think I cope with that all that well.
31	<i>You don't? OK. (pause) When you came back from the course and into your organisation what did you find to be the hardest parts about putting what you'd learned into practice?</i>
32	Um ...the different ways people ... taking account of the ways people who went to the course with me .. the different ways in which they sort of took that up and didn't take that up. Um, I found reasonably quickly a significant number of people who were at the leadership course either didn't pick that .. or well, they didn't have the same reflections as I did so it was sometimes hard to have conversations within the group and arrive at something sensible. Um, and it may be because there was .. it was too theoretical ... that you needed to have that real base for having a conversation or doing something together so it was a bit artificial and people had different agendas. But what's the ... other thing I think was really a feeling that you ought to do more with what you have spent that time and money on and the feeling of not doing enough of it but I must say over a period of time you forget those guilt feelings .. you remember ... um, you remember the things which made it good.. when you know it was good and you

	<b>Content</b>
	apply them and um nowadays I find that when I'm doing soemthing which starts from the leadership thing or is an adendum to that from readings and elsewhere um it's a lot less difficult .. I'm far more confident that this is the right way and I have to say that it was reinforced by people like <name> and <name> telling me oh well this has changed and you end up with this or something and so you have some positive reinforcement but I think if you like .. (I) didn;t have enough of that positive reinforcement immediatley after the course so it could be .. it could have been .. it could have gone as a failure if I had persisted with it..
33	<i>What made you continue to try to live that way?</i>
34	Um ...one would be just natural persistence at doing things .. it's not that difficult to do right? They were relatively easy to do you just had to be dogged about it um and the second thing was when you had success you realised just where it came from and it was the successes which nourished it .. it was clear you were having successes .. I was having successes. Um... and it was good ... it felt good , you did it again.
35	<i>What sort of successes did you have?</i>
36	Well, when your children say to you that you've changed it ... it means a lot.
37	<i>How did they say you'd changed?</i>
38	They didn't quite specify it actually but they did say, you know ... you change a lot... I think waht they really meant (was ) we can have a conversation with you without you flying off the handle .. you'd have to say that the home situation is pretty .. is a fairly harsh reflection on my personality um which I realised that .. if I could sort that out I'd do much better both at home and elsewhere ... I was a far more um listening type of person after the course and understand that um the problems which I see around me I probably had a fair hand in helping to create those problems regardless of where they seemed to come from. So I think they saw that I accepted that .. I took responsibility for it and they said you've changed.
39	<i>And what changed about your listening?</i>
40	(pause) I think the .. what's .. the most change was reflecting on what the conversation was .. I think that's what changed for me most um so the listening on ... um ...on real time probably didn't improve a lot and probably still hasn't improved a lot but what has changed is listening after real time um say playing it back um didn't .. did miss something there or didn't understand that or I... I was imposing something which wasn't there or something like that. So that... so

	<b>Content</b>
	that it's a reflection of that discussion .. I did spend more time reflection on things that happened rather than passing it off as someone was wrong or something like that..
41	<i>And just going back to any constraints to you acting as a leader in the workplace were there any that . were there any others that you can think of?</i>
42	Sorry, could you say that again?
43	<i>Just things in the workplace that constrained you from .. from acting the way you wanted to be as a leader?</i>
44	I think the bulk of it was myself ... Um.. I.... you know ... I ... um ..honestly don't think um unfortunately .. I always find that unfortunately part of that LTF course was .. it was always very hard to find some other reason than yourself .. seems like a self-fulfilling prophecy .. you keep on digging and you come back to yourself, or you should have done something about that there ..and you know you don't seem to be able to escape the fact that any constraints you put on yourself as a leader still comes back to you..
45	<i>So what you're saying is that there are no constraints other than the one you place on yourself?</i>
46	Yeah.... Yeah.... Yeah, it's horrible because you just find.. you just have problem apportioning blame somewhere else ... oh, I have anyway .. sorry I don't know whether everybody else has ..it becomes .... you mind in the short term... but in the long term it becomes clear that it wasn't the right answer .. that it still has something to do with how you.... I...didn't perceive the situation ... understand it ... read it or listen enough .. or any of those things or combination there of... um, now that's being a little a bit . you know, to one extreme. Obviously there things which probably there is an overall constraint, say people might feel that ... the field I'm working in .. <field>... is not a leadership position or something like that but even there I'm overcoming that by saying well actually that's not the case .. you can actually, you can actually talk to people about where you want to be and people are quite happy to listen ... so why didn't I do it before .. because I didn't do it, not because people stopped me physically.
47	<i>You mentioned about the other people who did the course with you and the way they acted differently after the course to the way you acted. Are there any examples of good leadership from that?</i>
48	Um ... I think that .. the discussion I have with [name1] ... you know, we went through that ... we have different takes and we learn differently but certainly the leadership things which he exhibits when I point out things (when I give him) feedback and explain where its

	<b>Content</b>
	<p>coming from LTF it exemplary as a person who has been able to take some feedback and act on it from time to time and vice versa I hope. Um, there have been some people who have been able to take feedback um I mean certainly in discussions with [name2] I see that quite a lot ... people who are open to feedback .. actually with [name2] I don't know whether the course changed him or he was always that way. With [name1] I know a little bit more about [name1] um ... I felt um... um yeah I mean .. I felt that perhaps I took it too literally, but the course demanded certain deliverables and I felt a lot of the guys .. so that's the negative side ... didn't place as much importance on those deliverables as the course ... I thought the course asked you to do .. like your extraordinary project. Which, maybe I was just taking it to an extreme. Good things, other good things....people had ... [name3] had .. I know took a lot of time to mentor me through .. which I suspect he has been changing in that respect .. he took a deliberate approach to mentor people who were not at that level and needed help and he picked people to help. Um so yeah, those are the sort of examples I can think readily.</p>
49	<p><i>You mentioned the extraordinary project ...what was that?</i></p>
50	<p>That was to establish .. that, well you know even now [business name] has a global business with a significant presence outside [country] .</p>
51	<p><i>And how did you go with that?</i></p>
52	<p>Well we have established businesses outside of [country] to the point we're ... we've got half of our workforce outside [country] I think 300 outside [country] and 300 in [country]. Obviously the turnover and profitability of the businesses are not where I would like to see um but I think that as an extraordinary project for the level I was pitching at I was quite comfortable .. I got to that point .. the problem again is that you keep reflecting on how .. how much better you could have delivered that um but yeah, if I were to assign marks maybe 60%.</p>
53	<p><i>And what was the benefit of the extraordinary project for you?</i></p>
54	<p>oh... The one thing was that I realised that I could set something up and ..people will help me from all sorts of different places which I don't necessarily expect but I got to set it ... I got to set the target ... I got the right target but ... that's my responsibility. but the benefit was knowing that I could and I could set it ...and I could.. and as a result of it people will help me from all around the place um the extraordinary project was also really good in one of those leadership learning which was um to let people know what you want out of something rather than sitting on it um to be more .. to be more</p>

	<b>Content</b>
	<p>outsspoken about what you want to happen because people can't read what you want otherwise. so it actually was a focus for applying different types of exercises which the leadership ... which the leadership course taught us in sometimes difficult situations .. um you reflect back and you say well I could of done this differently um but on the whole I'm quite satisfied with where I took the extraordinary intention to .</p>
55	<i>That's good</i>
56	<p>The other things was that the leadership course did teach us was that at some point you have to cut it off and say that's it .. done it, finished, declared it. move on. which also was very helpful for me because the organisation started changing and somebody's ... it became somebody else's job [name2]'s job to make sure that that actually happened and then my job became to support [name2] in making sure that actually happened though I could manage it. if it didn't have the wisdom of what the LTF taught me which was at some point you have to close it of and move on, I might have had a lot of resentment about a few things um as it is I remember noticing when [country] was going through, when we started putting people like [name4] coming in, I do remember the resentment that I felt because it was something that was created as part of the extraordinary thing and to not have people recognise it, it creates resentment to incur a lot of hard work on my par, it was fro me to reinforce myself to let it go. It was a hard thing, that one was the hardest thing to let go</p>
57	<i>So how did you decide to cut it off or let it go?</i>
58	<p>I think I just took the LTF course quite literally. It said at a certain point you have to let it go, and um I sensed it when [name2] came in and said his extraordinary target is this, I realised we'd .. one of us would have to move off that and I moved off .. he was my boss and it was um an .. my target now was to support him, um so it was the circumstances derived ... I suspect if the circumstances were different I might have done it slightly differently .. um.. but I was conscious at all stages .. at some stage we have to close it but that was something that um you know that was very helpful because otherwise you go insane trying to follow something for a long time.</p>
59	<i>OK, well in that case I should probably close this off .... so I'll just stop the recorder. (finishes)</i>

**Interviewee: Paul**

	<b>Content</b>
1	
2	<i>OK, so we're recording. The first thing I wanted to talk about was ... was your leadership training and what you can recall from that,</i>
3	What I can recall from it?
4	<i>Yeah. What the experience was like?</i>
5	<p>Yeah. OK, um, I guess you know, it was ...it was a.... going into I thought it was a really good opportunity ... um a couple of things I thought were good about was the um.. the mix of different people from other industries in there .. so it wasn't just [company] people... but it was also good having a group of [company] people in there as well .. um .. and able to work with them in a different manner to which um , I had to that point in time ..in my day to day work. um. so I thought that was... was sort of valuable to see a different ....ah .... insight and understanding of ... of people and where they are coming from. ahh... I guess the other aspect .. through that leadership training ... I saw it as an opportunity to .. to ... you know ...that it presented an opportunity to .. to um ..you know really use to concept of the extraordinary intention as a development vehicle um and again ... working with those relationships established there which .. which relationships I wouldn't perhaps I wouldn't have established in a normal working context um might of over time but not as quickly. I think the other um ... thing that I recall from it is um ... was the ... often the perception I had um to towards um problems and issues um relating to leadership were exactly that, they were often perception um it was my interpretation of things and that there was a possibility of having a different interpretation um and that was a... that was a new concept ... um ... I think I heard it well described when we had some further leadership discussion with um this guy [name] from [company] and ah that was the concept of your past being a cage and um you can let that .. if you let your past inform your future in some cases it can be fairly restrictive um so that was a .. that was an interesting ... to me an interesting learning and understanding ...</p>
6	<i>uh huh, can you sort of say a bit more about that?</i>
7	<p>um ... (breathes) ... I think the.... (long pause) .. the issue um ... I mean ...in that particular um situation I can remember um came to a bit of a head in a conflict I was having with um the person who was my manager at the time, it was [name] , and ummm ... we were both sort of butting heads and not making progress um... in resolving this issue and I remember talking to someone about that ..... and then recasting ... recasting that situation a different way ... a different interpretation on it and was the ... um .. you know, in case of needs</p>

	<b>Content</b>
	<p>... [name] needed something from me to move forward that I couldn't understand why he needed that therefore I was providing it ... I .. you know, and I was looking from my perspective ... why's he need this superfluous information .... um .. and you know I guess I was coming from ..you know .. in the past we haven't needed that so why do we need it now, a little bit, so there was a ... a barrier there , a hurdle..and eventually got to the point of .. perhaps ... stepping into issues a little bit and understanding his needs a little better .. from his position ... and learning through that process that ... eventually in satisfying his needs .. and he was looking a things from a very .. analytical sort of point of view (laughs) to satisfying that analytical need ... um ... it gave him what he required but it also satisfied my need to access funding and things like that to move forward for .. for well what I wanted to do at the time which was to develop [business name] and um .... in the end through that process I actually learned and got a valuable tool and subsequently I've taken the model and used that in the business going forward .. and I think it really came down to having the right sort of discussion with [name] around that issue.... as an example .... and understanding from him more clearly about what he valued and what he saw as being good examples of the things that satisfied his need .. and then... and then learning from those. So I think that was sort of a case where ... perhaps .. what I'd been able to do in the past as a .. as a way of moving forward ... succeeding, you know ...clearly reached its limits and wasn't working.... um, in some ways was um preventing me moving forward ... and then required me to change my approach and my attitude to move forward ... I guess it was ... that's a fairly simple exercise (breathes) ahm ...I think in the other .... area it .. it tends to um manifest itself I think in some ways ... is when we let our past inform ourselves is sometimes it creates a fear of the future ... a fear of ... um... what is possible ... and therefore we tend to um not stretch ourselves or not believe either in our potential or other people's potential ... of um ... you know achieving an objective or a goal .. or an outcome. ... and um ...again, I think that sometimes it's that .... that.... that cage can be fear of failure ... fear of the past ...</p>
8	<p><i>What um what other ways have you used what you learned from the LTF in your work?</i></p>
9	<p>Um. (long pause). I think it's sort of ... to me ...has helped create a clearer distinction between managing and leading ... um ... then in some ... some ways I think they're ... (breathes) .. different skill sets .... complementary but different ... and ... and the challenge for me has been to ... um ... in some cases ... to stop managing ... and ... and lead more .... and .... that means you know ... what I mean in that regard is to not .... to actually create space for others to manage and then .... also others to lead ... and I think in the past I probably would have been a lot more hands on ... there's a problem, I'll get in and I'll</p>

	Content
	fix it myself... and not provide the space for others ... to actually exercise their ability to do that .. so you know .. probably a tendency prior to that training to ... when I have been in leadership and management roles and ... to actually um get my hands to far down into the organisation .... um ....you know, do it myself... don't delegate effectively ... don't let others do it ... and others learn ...
10	<i>You mentioned the difference in the skill sets required for leadership and management. What do you think the skill sets are for um leadership?</i>
11	(long pause) um (long pause) I think .... ahhh.... more to um ... certainly to understand um ..... others in terms of where they may be coming from so .. I think there is a key issue of emotional intelligence in there .... and being able to actually step into other people's shoes, be they ... ah..ah. clients or be they you know ... our ... our ... our people. and understand where they might be coming from in a situation. I think then to be able to articulate a path from ... um .. where they might be coming from ... to the goal of where we need to get to .... um .... that they can understand and that the people who are required to .... you know um ... obviously execute that ... that strategy can understand ... and can relate to ... um ... it's ... it's about I guess you know in some ways it's being able to inspire action and to inspire others ... um ... it's consistency ... um .... it's .... not being afraid to be ... who you are .. you don't have to actually try and be someone else .... um ... but it's more important that you are consistent ... and you are ... yourself. um ... so I think they're .... they're to me important concepts of ... of leadership. um ... the um... and that's .... and that's ... it's sort of ... you know, in the end it's...it's sort of working through other people .... um ... which is .... it's the ability to work through ... through others ... um ... to achieve and outcome.... and um ....I guess in some ways you know .... to ... to continually ... sort of ... develop that capacity ... um .... in others ... so that you sort of in a way almost move to make yourself redundant ... in a way ... (laughs) um ....
12	<i>So what um.... when you um...ah, came back into the organisation what constraints did the organisation present to you in trying to be the person you wanted to be?</i>
13	(long pause) um ...I was probably lucky in a way because I think ... whether it was luck or planning or strategy ... um .... in that ... I ... had a role coming back into the organisation ... um ... which made it easier to be the person I wanted to be I think ...um .... I think initially I had some issues mto do with really understanding that I think um the hurdles initially were really to do with my understanding of the .. perhaps the situation um when I came back into the organisation ... ahhh .. and given the role for manager of the [name of business]

	<b>Content</b>
	business ... um ... to create [name of division] ... but initially ... my background around that was that ... you know ... I was on a role with ... no authority ... and no resources ... and no budget .... and told to go and create a business ... um so I think initially ... you know I saw these sort of things as being barriers ... um, and that sort of where perhaps on the conflict I had with [name] was around tha situation ... ah ... I think eventually I saw it as an opportunity ... ah, but it took a bit of additional coaching to help in that regard ... and I think that was ... valuable ... um ... in that follow up coaching ... and , um ... to really ... sort of ... put those .... I guess what would appear to be ... initial hurdles or roadblocks ... actually behind ... and actually just sort of realise ... what an opportunity it was ... to actually lead ... um ... as opposed to manage...
14	<i>So how did the coaching help with that realisation?</i>
15	Ah .... generally ... generally by challenging me (laughs) ... um ...to um ... to really ... get down to the ... the .... the fundamentals of the issues, you know .... you know .... what was really needed, what did I really need ... what ... you know ... and therefore what was the roadblock ... umm ... and you know ... and I think you know ... things like um .... a roadblock might be ... you've got no authority so I'll say I've got no authority ... um, and then to realise that ... that I've got plenty of influence (laughs) so if you have influence you perhaps don't need authority .... and through influence you can actually lead and get an outcome .... as opposed to having authority delegated to you. .... And through influence you can .... you can ... um ... get the resources you need ... such as funding ...as opposed to having a delegated budget .... um ... but you know that was a.. a simple shift from the importance of .... having authority .... to actually exercising influence.
16	<i>So since you've been ... ah ...back acting as a leader after the course ... what examples of good leadership have you seen? (across [company name]?) yeah. or anywhere for that matter.</i>
17	(long pause) um ...(long pause) I think ... ahh .... (long pause) I'll have to think about this [interviewer's name]. (long pause) I guess you know ... I'll think about that a little more ... um
18	<i>Well, you could um think about the opposite of that which is um what examples of leadership failure have you seen?</i>
19	(long pause) Ummm. I guess there's been a few of those. I guess examples of good leadership ... um ... I ... I can think of a couple of .. examples .. or quite a few examples of good leadersip in a way. Ahmm... I think if you look at [name of related company] ... and what was happening there and the issues with [name2] in that regard

	<b>Content</b>
	<p>... ahm ... I think at the end of the day ... um ... you know, that was handled well by [name3] ... quietly, ... to a .. to a, in the end, I think what's ended up a positive outcome. Ahmm, ... I think there's been a few examples like that as well ...I mean at times where ... you know ... where [name3]'s quietly ... worked with those people .... to ... a realisation ... in terms of ... you know their role and their future ... umm.... I think there's a similar situation ... you know with .... that occurred in [name of division]. Umm.... and cert....the ...when ...I was having ... you know working through issues with ... [name4] ... um, again I think .. um ... working with [name3] on that ... I saw some very good examples of ... of leadership ... of ... of really challenging the individual about ... you know really ... where they were coming from, trying to understand where they were coming from .... bring it back to ... to you know really trying to get clarity and understanding so that ... that person could really understand ... you know why were they feeling the way they were feeling ... um... what really did they want to get out of the situation in terms of where they were going .. and why... and in the end ... and certainly in the [name3] situation .... um .... it assisted in an outcome where the ... that person actually made a ... made a decision ... and informed decision themselves ....rather than imposing a decision upon them ... and ... and .. you know that was done in a ... ahm ... fairly efficient time frame as well ... and ... um ... I thought they were pretty good .... a number of pretty good examples of ... ahm ....In terms of ... um ....and I think also the ... you know the ...the .... um ... PFG.... you know I think there's been some good examples of leadership in the .... in ... in bringing that together in the ... in the strategy type work we've done ... the workshops ... the ... you know ... the ... you know, the team initially coming together to .. to design a new structure .. um, I actually thought that was good leadership. The ... um ... reverse ... bad leadership...um ...or failings ....ahh ... I think ... as a whole ... at the moment we're still not being true to our organisational ... what I'll call values, which is our eclectic... I'll use that to describe our ... our vision, our list of behaviours ... um ....I think I still see examples of not being true to that ...um .... across every level in the organisation. And, um ...And, um ..... and I think that's something that we've ... we've got to ... we're ... change.</p>
20	<p><i>Can you um ... explain why ... you see that as a failure of leadership?</i></p>
21	<p>(long pause) ahm ....why is that a failure of leadership? (long pause) ahm, because I think those... those things, you know ... um, they start with the leaders, [interviewer's name] ... it starts with the leadership...and um .... and um ... you know ... I think that's something that .... that we need to ... (breathes out) we need to ... to address in certain ....um, you know I said one of the things about leadership skills is consistency ... ahm ... I don't think that means you</p>

	<b>Content</b>
	know always doing the same thing ... but it's a consistent set of values ... a consistent set of standards.... um ... and um ... I think that consistency ... isn't always there in the way at times we've tackled some things.
22	<i>OK. That's good. That's covered the areas I wanted to cover. Um so thanks for that [interviewee's name] (right) I'll just turn the recorder off.</i>

***Appendix 4 - Ethics approval***

15 September 2008

Associate Professor Kenneth Dovey  
School of Systems, Management and Leadership  
CB10.04.351  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

Dear Kenneth,

UTS HREC 2008-158 – DOVEY (for SIMPSON, PhD Student) – “An enquiry into leadership as practice in a services organisation”

Thank you for your response to my email dated 16 June 2008. Your response satisfactorily addresses the concerns and questions raised by the Committee, and I am pleased to inform you that ethics clearance is now granted.

Your clearance number is UTS HREC REF NO. 2008-158A

Please note that the ethical conduct of research is an on-going process. The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires us to obtain a report about the progress of the research, and in particular about any changes to the research which may have ethical implications. This report form must be completed at least annually, and at the end of the project (if it takes more than a year). The Ethics Secretariat will contact you when it is time to complete your first report.

I also refer you to the AVCC guidelines relating to the storage of data, which require that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication of research. However, in NSW, longer retention requirements are required for research on human subjects with potential long-term effects, research with long-term environmental effects, or research considered of national or international significance, importance, or controversy. If the data from this research project falls into one of these categories, contact University Records for advice on long-term retention.

If you have any queries about your ethics clearance, or require any amendments to your research in the future, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the Research and Innovation Office, on 02 9514 9772.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Jane Stein-Parbury

Chairperson  
UTS Human Research Ethics Committee

## **References**

- Adams, S. 1998, *I'm not anti-business, I'm anti-idiot: a Dilbert collection*, Andrews McMeel Pub, New Jersey.
- Alvesson, M. 2011, 'Leaders as saints: leadership through moral peak performance', in M. Alvesson & A. Spicer (eds), *Metaphors we lead by*, Routledge, Oxon.
- Alvesson, M., Hardy, C. & Harley, B. 2008, 'Reflecting on reflexivity: reflexive textual practices in organization and management theory', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, pp. 480-501.
- Alvesson, M. & Kärreman, D. 2007, 'Constructing mystery: empirical matters in theory development', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 1265-81.
- Alvesson, M. & Sandberg, J. 2011, 'Generating research questions through problematization', *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 247-71.
- Alvesson, M. & Sandberg, J. 2012, 'Has management studies lost its way? Ideas for more imaginative and innovative research', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 247-71.
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldböck, K. 2009, *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research*, Sage Publications Limited, London.
- Alvesson, M. & Spicer, A. (eds) 2011, *Metaphors we lead by: understanding leadership in the real world*, Routledge, Oxon.
- Alvesson, M. & Spicer, A. 2012, 'Critical leadership studies: the case for critical performativity', *Human Relations*, vol. 65, no. 3, pp. 367-90.
- Alvesson, M. & Sveningsson, S. 2003a, 'The great disappearing act: difficulties in doing "leadership"', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 359-81.
- Alvesson, M. & Sveningsson, S. 2003b, 'Managers doing leadership: the extra-ordinarization of the mundane', *Human Relations*, vol. 56, no. 12, pp. 1435-59.

- Alvesson, M. & Willmott, H. 2002, 'Identity regulation as organizational control: producing the appropriate individual', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 39, no. 5, pp. 619-44.
- Anderson, L. 2006, 'Analytic autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 373-95.
- Anderson, W. 1992, *Reality isn't what it used to be*, Harper, San Francisco.
- Austin, J. 1962, *How to do things with words*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2011, *Landmark's controversial training programs*, Australian Broacasting Commission, Australia, viewed 24 December 2012, <<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2011/s3367386.htm>>.
- Bartley, W.W. 1978, *The transformation of a man: the founding of EST*, Clarkson N. Potter, New York.
- Bass, B.M. 1985, *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*, Free Press, New York.
- Bennis, W. 2007, 'The challenges of leadership in the modern world', *American Psychologist*, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 2-5.
- Berger, P.L. & Luckmann, T. 1967, *The social construction of reality*, Anchor, New York.
- Bohm, D. 1996, *On dialogue*, Routledge, New York.
- Boufoy-Bastick, B. 2004, 'Auto-interviewing, auto-ethnography and critical incident methodology for eliciting self-conceptualised worldview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 5, viewed 31/5/2013, <<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/651>>.
- Bourdieu, P. 1990, *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Brown, R.H. 1976, 'Social theory as metaphor: on the logic of discovery for the sciences of conduct', *Theory and Society*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 169-97.
- Burns, J.M. 1978, *Leadership*, Harper and Row, New York.
- Calás, M.B. & Smircich, L. 1991, 'Voicing seduction to silence leadership', *Organization Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 567-601.

- Carroll, B. & Levy, L. 2010, 'Leadership development as identity construction', *Management Communication Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 211-31.
- Carroll, B. & Simpson, B. 2012, 'Capturing sociality in the movement between frames: An illustration from leadership development', *Human relations*, vol. 65, no. 10, pp. 1283-309.
- Chang, H. 2007, 'Autoethnography: raising cultural consciousness of self and others', in G. Walford (ed.), *Methodological Developments in Ethnography*, vol. 12, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, London, pp. 207-21.
- Chang, H. 2008, *Autoethnography as method*, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA.
- Clegg, S. & Hardy, C. 2006, 'Representation and reflexivity', *The Sage Handbook of Organization Studies*, Sage, London, pp. 425-43.
- Cunliffe, A.L. 2003, 'Reflexive inquiry in organizational research: questions and possibilities', *Human Relations*, vol. 56, no. 8, pp. 983-1003.
- Cunliffe, A.L. 2009a, 'The philosopher leader: on relationalism, ethics and reflexivity—A critical perspective to teaching leadership', *Management Learning*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 87-101.
- Cunliffe, A.L. 2009b, *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about management*, Sage Publications Limited, Thousand Oaks.
- Day, D.V. & Harrison, M.M. 2007, 'A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 360-73.
- De Bono, E. 1999, *New thinking for the new millennium*, Viking Adult, New York.
- Denzin, N.K. 2003, 'Performing [auto] ethnography politically', *The Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 257-78.
- Doloriert, C. & Sambrook, S. 2011, 'Accommodating an autoethnographic PhD: the tale of the thesis, the viva voce, and the traditional business school', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 582-615.
- Edgar, A. 2006, *Habermas: the key concepts*, Taylor & Francis, Oxon.

- Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. & Bochner, A.P. 2010, 'Autoethnography: an overview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 12, viewed 31/5/2013, <<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589>>.
- Epitropaki, O. 2003, 'What is transformational leadership', viewed 20 April 2013, <<http://esrccoigroup.shef.ac.uk/pdf/whatis/transformational.pdf>>.
- Erhard, W., Jensen, M. & Zaffron, S. 2009, 'Integrity: a positive model that incorporates the normative phenomena of morality, ethics and legality', *Harvard Business School NOM Working Paper No. 06-11, Barbados Group Working Paper No. 06-03, Simon School Working Paper No. FR 08-05*.
- Fairhurst, G.T. 2011, 'Communicating leadership metaphors', in M. Alvesson & A. Spicer (eds), *Metaphors we lead by: understanding leadership in the real world*, Routledge, Oxon, pp. 180-93.
- Fairhurst, G.T. & Grant, D. 2010, 'The social construction of leadership: a sailing guide', *Management Communication Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 171-210.
- Fairhurst, G.T. & Uhl-Bien, M. 2012, 'Organizational discourse analysis (ODA): examining leadership as a relational process', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 23.
- Flores, F. 1982, 'Management and Communication in the Office of the Future', PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley.
- Fook, J. & Gardner, F. 2007, *Practising critical reflection: a handbook*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, UK.
- Ford, J. & Harding, N. 2007, 'Move over management we are all leaders now', *Management Learning*, vol. 38, no. 5, pp. 475-93.
- Foucault, M. 1980, *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, Pantheon, New York.
- Foucault, M. 1988, *Madness and civilization: a history of insanity in the age of reason*, Vintage, New York.
- Foucault, M. 1992, *The history of sexuality: the use of pleasure*, vol. 2, Penguin, Camberwell, Vic.

- Foucault, M. 1995, *Discipline & punish: the birth of the prison*, Vintage, New York.
- Frankl, V.E. 1984, *Man's search for meaning*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Gemmill, G. & Oakley, J. 1992, 'Leadership: an alienating social myth?', *Human Relations*, vol. 45, no. 2, pp. 113-29.
- Gherardi, S. 2009, 'Introduction: the critical power of the practice lens', *Management Learning*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 115-28.
- Ghoshal, S. 2005, 'Bad management theories are destroying good management practices', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 75-91.
- Goss, T. 1996, *The last word on power*, RosettaBooks.
- Grace, M. 2003, 'Origins of leadership: The etymology of leadership', *Annual Conference of the International Leadership Association*, Irwin, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.
- Griffin, D. 2004, *The emergence of leadership: linking self-organization and ethics*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Griffin, D. 2005, 'Leadership and the role of conflict in processes of mutual recognition: the emergence of ethics', in R. Stacey & D. Griffin (eds), *Complexity and the experience of leading organizations*, Routledge, Oxon.
- Griffin, D. & Stacey, R. (eds) 2005, *Complexity and the experience of leading organizations*, Routledge, Oxon.
- Grint, K. 2000, *The arts of leadership*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Habermas, J. 1984, *The theory of communicative action. Reason and the rationalization of society*, trans. T. McCarthy, vol. 1, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Habermas, J. 1987, *The theory of communicative action. Lifeworld and system: a critique of functionalist reason*, vol. 2, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Hacking, I. 1999, *The social construction of what?*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Harmon, M.M. 1998, 'Decisionism and action: changing perspectives in organization theory', *International Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 21, no. 6-8, pp. 819-38.

- Hass, L. 2008, *Merleau-Ponty's philosophy*, Kindle edn, Indiana University Press.
- Hayakawa, S.I. & Hayakawa, A.R. 1990, *Language in thought and action*, Harcourt, Orlando FL.
- Heidegger, M. 1962, *Being and time*, Blackwell, Oxford UK.
- Holt, N.L. 2003, 'Representation, legitimation, and autoethnography: an autoethnographic writing story', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 18-28.
- Hughes, S., Pennington, J.L. & Makris, S. 2012, 'Translating autoethnography across the AERA standards toward understanding autoethnographic scholarship as empirical research', *Educational Researcher*, vol. 41, no. 6, pp. 209-19.
- Jensen, M.C. 2001, 'Value maximization, stakeholder theory, and the corporate objective function', *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 8-21.
- Jensen, M.C. & Meckling, W.H. 1976, 'Theory of the firm: managerial behavior, agency costs and ownership structure', *Journal of Financial Economics*, vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 305-60.
- Jersey, R.A.R.I.o.N. 2013, *Home page*, Rick A Ross Institute of New Jersey, viewed 3 January 2013 2013, <<http://www.rickross.com/>>.
- Johnson, M. & Lakoff, G. 1999, 'Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought', *New York*.
- Kärreman, D. & Alvesson, M. 2009, 'Resisting resistance: counter-resistance, consent and compliance in a consultancy firm', *Human Relations*, vol. 62, no. 8, pp. 1115-44.
- Kuhn, T.S. 1962, *The structure of scientific revolutions* University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Lachman, R. & Greenwood, R. 1996, 'Change as an underlying theme in professional service organizations: special issue', *Organization Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 563-699.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1980a, 'The metaphorical structure of the human conceptual system', *Cognitive Science*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 195-208.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1980b, *Metaphors we live by*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1999, *Philosophy in the flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*, Basic Books, New York.
- Landmark Education 2011, *Landmark's Educational Methodology*, viewed 25 November 2011,  
 <[http://www.landmarkeducation.com/landmark\\_forum\\_educational\\_methodology.jsp](http://www.landmarkeducation.com/landmark_forum_educational_methodology.jsp)>.
- Landmark Education 2012, *Home Page*, viewed 24 December 2012 2012,  
 <<http://www.landmarkpersonaldevelopment.com/>>.
- Lawrence, T.B., Malhotra, N. & Morris, T. 2012, 'Episodic and systemic power in the transformation of professional service firms', *Journal of Management Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 102-43.
- Learmonth, M. & Humphreys, M. 2012, 'Autoethnography and academic identity: glimpsing business school doppelgängers', *Organization*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 99-117.
- Leonard, G. 1992, *Mastery*, Plume, New York.
- Loehr, J. & Schwartz, T. 2001, 'The making of a corporate athlete', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 79, no. 1, pp. 120-9.
- McCarl, S.R., Zaffron, S., Nielson, J.M. & Kennedy, S.L. 2001, 'The promise of philosophy and the Landmark Forum', *Contemporary Philosophy*, vol. 23, no. 1&2, pp. 51-9.
- McSwain, C.J., White, O.F. & Bruce, W. 1989, 'Transforming the Golem: technicism, human-relations technology, and the human project', *Public Administration Review*, vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 197-200.
- Mezirow, J. 2000, *Learning as transformation: critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Mowles, C. 2011, *Rethinking Management: Radical Insights from the Complexity Sciences*, Gower Publishing Company.
- O'Reilly, D. & Reed, M. 2010, 'Leaderism': an evolution of managerialism in UK public service reform', *Public Administration*, vol. 88, no. 4, pp. 960-78.
- O'Reilly, D. & Reed, M. 2011, 'The grit in the oyster: professionalism, managerialism and leaderism as discourses of UK public services modernization', *Organization Studies*, vol. 32, no. 8, pp. 1079-101.

- Onyx, J. & Dovey, K. 1999, 'Cohabitation in the time of cholera: praxis in the community sector in the era of corporate capitalism', *Community Development Journal*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 179-90.
- Oswick, C., Putnam, L. & Keenoy, T. 2004, 'Tropes, discourse and organizing', in D. Grant (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Discourse*, pp. 105-28.
- Parker, M. 2002, *Against management: organization in the age of managerialism*, Polity, Oxford.
- Pinker, S. 1995, *The language instinct: the new science of language and mind*, Penguin London.
- Poerksen, U. 1995, *Plastic words: the tyranny of a modular language*, Penn State University Press, University Park, PA.
- Prahalad, C.K. 1994, 'Corporate governance or corporate value added?: Rethinking the primacy of shareholder value', *Journal of Applied Corporate Finance*, vol. 6, no. 4.
- Preston, D.S. 2001, 'Managerialism and the post-enlightenment crisis of the British university', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 3-4, pp. 343-63.
- Rorty, R. 1989, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rose, N. 1999, *Powers of freedom: reframing political thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rost, J.C. 1993, *Leadership for the twenty-first century*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT.
- Sandberg, J. & Alvesson, M. 2011, 'Ways of constructing research questions: gap-spotting or problematization?', *Organization*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 23-44.
- Scherr, A. & Jensen, M. 2007, 'A new model of leadership', viewed 31/5/2013, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=920623](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=920623).
- Searle, J. 1995a, *Construction of social reality*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic.
- Searle, J. 1995b, *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Free Press, New York, NY.

- Searle, J. 2005, 'What is an institution?', *Journal of Institutional Economics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1–22.
- Seidl, D., Becker, K.H. & Luhmann, N. 2005, *Niklas Luhmann and organization studies*, Liber and Copenhagen Business School Press, Malmo, Sweden.
- Shaw, P. 2004, *Changing conversations in organizations: a complexity approach to change*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Simpson, R. & Gill, R. 2007, 'Design for development: a review of emerging methodologies', *Development in Practice*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 220-30.
- Simpson, R. & Gill, R. 2008, 'Design for social systems: change as conversation', *Complexity and Organization*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 69-88.
- Sinclair, A. 2009, 'Seducing leadership: stories of leadership development', *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 266-84.
- Sokolowski, R. 2000, *Introduction to phenomenology*, Kindle edn, Cambridge University Press.
- Spicer, A. & Alvesson, M. 2011, 'Conclusion', in M. Alvesson & A. Spicer (eds), *Metaphors we lead by: understanding leadership in the real world*, Oxford University Press, Oxon, pp. 194-205.
- Spicer, A., Alvesson, M. & Kärreman, D. 2009, 'Critical performativity: the unfinished business of critical management studies', *Human Relations*, vol. 62, no. 4, pp. 537-60.
- Spinosa, C., Flores, F. & Dreyfus, H.L. 1999, *Disclosing new worlds: entrepreneurship, democratic action, and the cultivation of solidarity*, The MIT Press, Boston.
- Spry, T. 2010, 'Call it swing: a jazz blues autoethnography', *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 271-82.
- Stacey, R. & Griffin, D. (eds) 2005, *A complexity perspective on researching organizations: taking experience seriously*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Stacey, R.D. 2001, *Complex responsive processes in organizations: learning and knowledge creation*, Routledge, London and New York.
- Stacey, R.D. 2002, *Complexity and management*, Routledge, London and New York.

- Stanley, M. 1978, *The technological conscience: survival and dignity in an age of expertise*, Free Press, New York.
- Taber, N. 2012, 'Beginning with the self to critique the social: critical researchers as whole beings', in D.L. Naidoo (ed.), *An Ethnography of Global Landscapes and Corridors*, InTech, <  
<http://www.intechopen.com/books/an-ethnography-of-global-landscapes-andcorridors/beginning-with-the-self-to-critique-the-social-critical-researchers-as-whole-beings>>.
- Tillmann, L.M. 2009, 'Speaking into silences: autoethnography, communication, and applied research', *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 94-7.
- Uhl-Bien, M. 2006, 'Relational leadership theory: exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing', *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 6, pp. 654-76.
- Wall, S. 2006, 'An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 146-60.
- Wall, S. 2008, 'Easier said than done: writing an autoethnography', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 38-53.
- Western, S. 2007, *Leadership: a critical text*, Sage Publications Limited, London.
- Wiktionary 2012, *Leadership*, Wikimedia Foundation, viewed 27 December 2012, <<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/leadership>>.
- Winograd, T. & Flores, F. 1986, *Understanding computers and cognition: a new foundation for design*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Norwood, NJ.
- Zaffron, S. & Logan, D. 2009, *The three laws of performance*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco, CA.