Performing Leadership

Edward Peck and Helen Dickenson

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MANAGING AND LEADING IN INTER-AGENCY SETTINGS

Also by Edward Peck

BEYOND DELIVERY: Policy Implementation as Sense-Making and Settlement (*with Perri 6)*

MANAGING NETWORKS OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ORGANIZATIONS (*with Perri 6, Nick Goodwin and Tim Freeman*)

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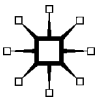

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Prologue: Why Write Another Book About Leadership?

A short history of how we come to be here

Our interest in the performance of leadership started almost ten years ago when a freelance theatre director called Kate Sinclair agreed to run some experiential sessions for participants on a leadership development programme that the first author was co-leading with Huw Richards and Deborah Davidson for senior managers in health and social care agencies in the North-West of England. Based on a combination of techniques used to build actors into theatre companies alongside voice and body work, they transpired not only to be highly enjoyable but were always reported as being helpful to participants in developing their leadership capability. They became – and remain – a highly regarded feature of all our subsequent programmes.

However, despite being popular and pertinent, they did not have much theoretical connection with the rest of the syllabus. Furthermore, most of the literature which discussed leadership and performance – which we shall explore in more detail later – did not seem to the current authors to have much depth or, upon closer inspection, was not really about performance at all (a case in point is Peter Vaill's (1989) *Managing as a Performing Art: new ideas for a world of chaotic change* which was largely a personal reflection on the implications of complexity theory for organisations). Meeting Kate McLuskie – Director of the Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham – provided a navigable route into the world of performance studies and to two ideas central to the argument of this book: the distinction between leadership "is" performance and leadership "as" performance; and the enactment, narrative and audience framework. These gave us a rubric around which to arrange a number of related ideas which previously had lacked focus.

Surprisingly, at least to us, many of the concepts that we encountered in performance studies were already familiar to us from our work with our Birmingham colleagues Tim Freeman and Perri 6 on the ritualistic and symbolic aspects of organisational governance. These were especially influential on our concept of leadership "is" performance. Simultaneously, Tim Freeman's exploration of post-modernist and feminist sources pointed to some important ideas relating to performativity that came to shape our notion of leadership "as" performance; that is, the impact of (re)-iteration and (re)-citation that takes place in the warp and weft of organisational relationships. Together, we have written a number of papers on these topics (Peck *et al.*, 2004b; Freeman & Peck, 2007; Peck *et al.*, 2008; Peck *et al.*, 2009; Freeman & Peck, 2009) which have inevitably shaped parts of this text.

Furthermore, our shared interest in what has become known as neo-Durkheimian institutional theory (NDIT) seemed to offer the prospect of rooting our notions of performing leadership in a robust and generalisable account of organisational context; despite the emphasis on context in leadership studies for most of the last hundred years, the field has not previously furnished such an account. In some respects, this book is the third in what has turned out to be a trilogy of texts in which the first author has been involved that explore the implications of applying NDIT to a range of issues in organisational studies. The first, *Managing Networks of Twenty-First Century Organisations* (Perri 6, Nick Goodwin, Edward Peck and Tim Freeman) was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2006. This publisher also issued *Beyond Delivery: policy implementation as sensemaking and settlement* (Edward Peck and Perri 6) in the same year. We shall return to our use of NDIT in a moment.

Developing these links between anthropology, sociology and performance studies enabled us to start to fashion a theory of performing leadership that connected Kate Sinclair's experiential sessions with the more formal part of the development programmes. Furthermore, drawing on cultural studies and material from storytelling, discourse analysis, advertising and political science meant that we could flesh out the separate elements of the enactment, narrative and audience framework significantly.

It is important to note that most of the ideas in this text have been introduced to and debated with participants on our leadership development programmes; their practical value to leaders is one of the main motivations for codifying them in this text (and also explains the separate chapter on this topic in Section 4). Most of the ideas contained in

this text have been exposed to programme participants, but not all of them. The challenge to the psychological paradigm of leadership and leadership development that occupies the first substantive chapter has been festering quietly for a number of years; however, it would have been churlish to have introduced it into programmes where many of our co-contributors were working fruitfully within this tradition. Whilst we think that this critique is important in preparing the ground for the alternative account of leadership that follows, we do recognise that the tone is slightly more polemical than might be strictly necessary. The content of the last substantive chapter – on authenticity and leadership – as well as the philosophical material on the self in Chapter 2 has tended to prove unsettling for participants and we have not always pursued its implications within our programmes, although this may well be more a failure of nerve on our part than on theirs. These topics have been, however, the focus of a number of conversations with Judith Smith as she completed her PhD thesis.

This short history hopefully gives an insight into the origins of this text and why we believe it is distinctive. In taking the performance of leadership seriously, it draws on a wide range of disciplines to set-out its theoretical contribution to leadership studies and practical implications for leadership development. As a consequence, ultimately it suggests a new resolution to the puzzle: if leadership is the answer, what is the question? Or, to put it another way, what is the general function that leadership plays in all organisations and what form does it take in particular sorts of organisations?

This history serves to acknowledge the significant debt that we owe to a number of colleagues who have worked at or with the University of Birmingham over recent years. It would be a better book if we had managed to rise to all of their challenges, in particular those provided most recently by Perri 6, Tim Freeman and Chris Mabey. This summary also introduces the range of literature that we engaged with in its composition. Inevitably we will not have done some of these sources justice due to lack of time, space or intellectual capacity; we trust that any misinterpretations or omissions do not undermine the thrust of the overall argument.

Sensemaking and NDIT

We see our particular contribution as both lying within and further developing what we have termed the sensemaking (and has also been dubbed the constructivist, Lambert *et al.*, 2002) account of leadership. Building primarily on the work of Weick (e.g. Weick, 1995, although

we also note some fruitful alternative approaches to sensemaking), in Chapter 4 we identify Pye (2005) and, particularly, Grint (e.g. 2005a) as the two commentators who have made the most significant contributions to developing this perspective. Furthermore, Grint has referred regularly (e.g. 2005b) to the performative nature of leadership without ever exploring the implications of this observation. It is in undertaking this exploration that we believe this book enhances the breadth and depth of this sensemaking perspective on leadership.

Many writers in this tradition, and especially Grint, acknowledge two additional features of sensemaking and leadership that we also investigate in considerably more detail in this text. We come back to both of these in the Epilogue to show how we believe we have moved the constructivist approach forward, but they warrant a brief mention here.

The first feature is the importance of context as a constraint on the meaning both that leaders can suggest for events and that subordinates and peers can accept. However, as we noted above, there has been a conspicuous absence in the literature of a robust and generalisable discussion of context (albeit this accusation could be levelled at all theories of leadership over the past century, it is especially problematic for the sensemaking approach). NDIT – neo-Durkheimian institutional theory – provides just such an account and thus plays a central role in this text. Although we introduce NDIT in Chapter 4, we want to make clear at the outset that we are deploying it as a heuristic; that is, as a device which creates recurring patterns in ways of organising that otherwise are absent. Overall, it represents a very productive tool for establishing working descriptions of and predictions about which performances of authority and styles of sensemaking by leaders may be most successful in generating followers in specific settings; we illustrate its utility by re-analysing case studies presented by other writers. We also hope to demonstrate that our adoption of this institutional framework neither undermines the influence of agency nor implies the organisational determinism of which institutional theory is often accused.

The second feature is that leaders' sensemaking has purpose; it is intended to persuade subordinates and peers that the leaders' cause is worthy of followership. At the close of Section 2, and after presenting a wealth of theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, we argue that the presence of leadership is one – but only one – of the factors that underpins individuals committing themselves to a particular course of action in a specific situation. The acceptance of the leaders' authority by an audience – by subordinates, superordinates and peers – is the purpose of the leadership performance. Whilst sensemaking by organisational

leaders may make a significant contribution to producing audience commitment, it is not sufficient in itself to prompt that commitment. Furthermore, the symbolic and emotional aspects of leaders' performances are at least as important as the instrumental and the rational in making the authority of the leader legible and legitimate to the audience. So, if leadership is the answer, the question relates to the manner in which organisational members perform authority as one method of generating commitment to direction or action.

Of course, we recognise the danger in giving away the punchline before we have provided the set-up. However, we hope that this conclusion, derived from looking at leadership through the lens' of performance, context and authority, will prove so enticing that you will now want to read just one more book about leadership …

Clarifying our use of "performance"

One common confusion that occurs within development programmes in relation to performance is that the term has acquired a number of organisational meanings in recent years; indeed, many participants have "performance" in their job title. In order to distinguish between these meanings, we draw on McKenzie's (2001) suggestion that there are three predominant types of performance: organisational (efficiency); technological (effectiveness); and cultural (efficacy).

McKenzie's general theory of performance links organisational performance – as in performance targets – with the challenge of enhancing efficiency. Effectiveness he connects with technological performance as the technical delivery of prescribed tasks. Much overlooked, he argues, McKenzie views cultural performance as being as central as organisational and technological performance, distinguishing it from these other two forms by its challenge of achieving efficacy. To over-simplify McKenzie's schema rather for our purposes: efficiency is concerned with doing the thing right; effectiveness with doing the right thing; and efficacy with shaping notions of what constitutes rightness. For us, therefore, the performance of leadership is efficacious when it enhances the legibility and legitimacy of leaders' authority with an audience such that it strengthens the bonds that commit people to tasks.

Structure of book

The book is arranged into five sections, of which this short Prologue comprises the first.

The second section seeks to put performance into the picture of leadership through three distinct foci in each of three chapters. Firstly, Chapter 2 points out the consequences of psychological accounts of leadership predominating in the literature since its inception. It suggests that the obsession with the essential characteristics of the individual leader that have characterised these accounts has crowded out other potential theoretical perspectives on leadership which may have been productive; we also take an initial look at this predominance for the practices of leadership development. Readers familiar with both the history of leadership theory – and the critique of the psychological paradigm – may choose to move straight on to Chapter 3.

Some of these neglected perspectives – drawn from philosophy, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies – are introduced in Chapter 3 so that their contribution to leadership theory can be sketched out. Overall, and to summarise rather crudely, they suggest that leadership is better thought of as relational and not individual. In conclusion, it suggests that the "self" is social and episodic rather than singular and continuous; the "self" is a product of interactions in a significantly constrained social world. As a consequence, it is the attribution of leadership that shapes the sense of "self" rather than the characteristics of the "self" producing the leader.

Chapter 4 introduces our conception of performing leadership, outlining its immediate origins in post-modernism and social constructionism and locating it within sensemaking accounts, as noted above. It establishes the two key frameworks – leadership "is" and "as" performance and enactment, narrative and audience – within which the ideas in Section 3 are arranged.

Section 3 consists of four chapters and is where the original theoretical contribution of the book mostly resides; these insights are also illustrated by a range of examples largely drawn from previously published or presented research on organisations. Chapter 5 looks at the enactment of leadership from the perspective that the rituals of organisation life literally render leadership a performance (that is, leadership "is" performance). In particular, this chapter draws attention to the symbolic aspects of the performance of leadership and their implications for the emotional responses that underpin the commitment of followers in specific settings.

Chapter 6 explores the enactment of leadership in the relationships that make up the warp and weft of organisational life (that is, leadership "as" a performance). It is here that the impact of (re)-iteration and (re)-citation in everyday interaction is addressed. Once again, the

adoption by the leader of an emotional tone sensitive to the context is revealed as central to the successful performance of authority.

Chapter 7 examines the common accounts of the structural forms of successful stories before moving onto the organisational literatures on myths and discourse. These return us to the crucial role of leaders' stories in their shaping of sensemaking, and also offer some thoughts on how leaders can deploy stories in support of organisational change, whilst emphasising the point that the meaning of any story is in the mind of the receiver.

This recognition that audiences are comprised of individuals, albeit ones linked to communities of interest that may influence their sensemaking, is central to Chapter 8. Drawing on cultural studies (in particular in relation to TV and film), accounts from marketing and advertising, performance studies and political science, it concludes with a reflection on the ways in which leaders' performances can create affiliation (or disaffiliation) amongst audiences, the implications for the legibility and legitimacy of their putative leaders' authority and thus their willingness to commit to organisational direction or action.

Section 4 looks at two issues that now appear even more problematic in the light of the analysis in Sections 2 and 3. Chapter 9 examines what our account of performing leadership might say about the practice of leadership development, including some evidence from a small study undertaken by the authors. Chapter 10 reflects again on "self", authenticity and leadership, expanding on some ideas first explored in Chapters 3 and 8.

Section 5 contains the epilogue which summarises our views on our contribution to the field and areas which still require further investigation (for instance, what might the performative approach say about collective leadership when several aspects of the performance are rarely created and/or sustained by a single individual).

Who is this book for?

We hope that this brief summary of its major concerns, and its origins in the practice of leadership development, indicate that this text has been written to be of interest beyond the communities of academics interested in theories of organisational leadership. Indeed, we trust that it will prove of as much value to practitioners designing and delivering – and managers participating in – leadership development programmes as to tutors and students involved in undergraduate business and postgraduate leadership studies.

It is our experience that it is not just academics that enjoy and benefit from the process of problematising the concept of leadership – and its potential development – as we do in the course of this book. Indeed, organisational members who hold or aspire to hold positions of leadership in their organisation are often only too aware that many of the theories of leadership that have been promoted as panaceas during the course of their careers fail to get to grips with the complexity of their experience; as a consequence, they do not prove particularly helpful in enhancing their leadership practice. We make the modest claim – supported by some limited evidence presented in Chapter 9 – that our performative approach offers a way of both reflecting this complexity and furnishing a framework that enables leaders to potentially develop their practice in response to it. Our aspiration for what follows is that it moves forward the debate about the theory and the practice of leadership and leadership development.

Acknowledgements

We have already acknowledged our considerable intellectual debts to colleagues in this Prologue. It only remains for us to thank our publisher for their ongoing support, all the participants on our leadership development programmes who have engaged with these ideas over the years, Wendy Spurr for patiently preparing the manuscript and you, the reader, for sharing our interest in the topic sufficiently to at least get this far!

Edward Peck
Helen Dickinson
Birmingham, February 2009

Section 2

Putting Performance in the Picture

Introduction

The first chapter in this section summarises the history of leadership studies and, to a much more limited extent, leadership development in the United States and United Kingdom over the past hundred years. Of course, we are not the first people to chart this territory and we will not be the last; indeed, there are several texts available which cover this topic in more detail than we do here (for example, Northouse, 2004; Bass, 1990; Storey, 2004a; Shackleton, 1995; Yukl, 2002). So, why are we choosing to dedicate an entire chapter to this endeavour?

The answer is that we want to look at this literature through a specific lens. As will become clearer as the argument of the book unfolds – as we introduce ideas from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies and other academic fields – this initial overview has a specific purpose: it seeks to outline the grounds for a challenge to the ongoing predominance of psychological accounts of leadership and leadership development that has been established over the past hundred years.

Firstly, by looking at studies of leadership across a number of temporal periods, we want to establish that leadership is not an "object" which exists "out there" in the world, waiting to be uncovered; rather, the theories of leadership that emerge at particular times are shaped by contemporary assumptions about the nature of society and organisations in which leadership is exercised. We want to argue both that the primacy of the psychological paradigm in leadership studies to date reflects the broader influence of that discipline in 20th century society (as represented elsewhere by the idea of the "Century of the Self" Curtis, 2002) and that the very number and variety of psychological

frameworks for understanding leadership undermine the plausibility of a single definitive account that each purports to present. This first challenge is the focus of Chapter 2.

Secondly, we want to show that these psychological approaches are typically essentialist in nature, concerned with identifying and improving the "essential self". Although we would acknowledge that some insights have accrued from this enterprise, we will show that there are also considerable disadvantages from addressing leadership from within this modernist project; for example, one significant consequence is that mainstream leadership development has tended to focus on the intra-personal rather than the inter-personal level (Day, 2000). By bringing in a wider range of intellectual perspectives on the individual, organisation and society, we seek to show that leadership is much more usefully viewed as a relational process, as opposed to a set of universal personal characteristics or behaviours which can be revealed and applied. This second challenge is developed in the second chapter in this section.

Of course, it is a truth universally acknowledged that no book on leadership can be taken seriously unless it has a theory of its own. We are not bold enough to undermine that assumption. Thus, Chapter 4 explores in some detail the theories of leadership that have come out of the social constructionist and sensemaking literature before introducing the performative account of leadership that builds upon these ideas (and which is then examined in much more depth in Section 3).

2

In Search of the Leaderful Self: The Rise and Rise of the Psychological Paradigm of Leadership

Evolution of leadership studies

Many recent accounts of the evolution of leadership studies organise theories of leadership into conceptual "families" which are associated with particular time periods (for example, Bass, 1990; Rost, 1991; Barley & Kunda, 1992). Presenting theories of leadership in this way helps to identify the contrasting ways in which leadership has been defined in different times. In this chapter we follow in this tradition by outlining the range of theories that have achieved plausibility and/or popularity within successive decades over the past hundred years.

Whilst adopting this chronological approach, we are aware of Storey's (2004c) warning that sequential accounts of leadership tend to imply that previous theories have been refuted and superseded: '[I]n reality, questions concerning leadership qualities and characteristics, appropriate styles, contingent conditions and transactional, as well as transformational, relations continue to perplex and prompt debate' (p. 16). In other words, few accounts of leadership that have gained credibility during the last century have failed to leave any trace on subsequent theories even if they may have been overshadowed for some time before re-appearing, albeit often unacknowledged and frequently re-shaped.

Adopting a social constructionist stance (and we will expand on this issue further in Chapter 4), we suggest that this widely recognised idea of temporal development in leadership theory allows us to pinpoint the particular discourses prevalent during distinct periods. Identifying such discourses enables us to investigate the perceptions, assumptions and norms which held sway and the ways in which these discourses originated in and were influenced by much wider socio-cultural values. Overall, however, in this chapter we pay particular attention to the

influence that psychology has exercised over leadership studies, not least because this discipline rose to such academic and social prominence during the 20th century. We are not suggesting that other discourses of society and organisation – and thus theories of leadership – have not also existed concurrently. Nonetheless, we do want to argue that they have not been valued to the same degree as those derived from psychology. Chapter 3 introduces a range of other intellectual perspectives which have been less present in – if not absent from – the leadership literature but which we believe to be more plausible in developing a robust relational account of leadership and leadership development.

Before embarking on the historical journey, it may be worth adding another proviso. Whilst most academic disciplines have their share of quacks and mountebanks, leadership theory has been particularly prone to gurus who wish to exploit the income-generation potential of their account (books, consultancy, development programmes, assessment tools etc.). Thus, an early concern of writers on leadership concerned whether leaders are "born" or "made". This was soon resolved, not least, we suspect, because if effective leadership is conceived as the product of "nature" then leadership development programmes, for example, are not necessary; consequently, much of the impetus behind the nascent leadership development industry would have been lost. Clearly, the way in which the phenomenon of leadership is conceptualised and popularised can have significant implications for the attractiveness of the interventions which are then put in place to develop leadership in line with that conception. Furthermore, the creation or adaptation of organisations to design and deliver those interventions gives considerable institutional momentum to their thriving and surviving. We will illustrate this point, on occasions, in what follows.

The paragraphs that follow chart the emergence of the major approaches to and theories of leadership as they have developed over the last century, up to and including transformational leadership. We consider how each conceptualises leadership – and its development – and the major criticisms of these approaches. The chapter then moves on to consider what these approaches and theories tell us about the major societal and organisational influences on leadership studies; here we argue that the dominance of psychology has had particular consequences for how the notion of the self has been conceptualised and outline the implications of this both for the theory of leadership and the practice of leadership development.

"Great man" leadership

Much of the early leadership literature at the start of the 20th century initially focused on the leadership of "great men". These studies typically examined renowned social, political and military leaders (for example, Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon) (see, for example, Tead, 1929, 1935; Bird, 1940; Barnard, 1948) to try and identify what innate qualities and characteristics they possessed which set them apart from others and made them more adept at inspiring and directing them. The "great man" approach regards this personal superiority as imperative, with context having little influence over the effectiveness of leadership. There are a number of important dimensions to this theory.

First and foremost, it directed attention at the birth of leadership studies to the individual at the expense of the social or relational; as Gill (2006) observes: "leadership trait approaches are mostly psychological in approach" (p. 37). Second, whilst this perspective was the intellectual high watermark of the idea that leaders are "born" and not "made", it created the popular notion of the leader as one with a special set of gifts that still has resonance today (for example, in the arguments advanced for so-called "fat cat" remuneration packages). Thirdly, the use of the term "man" is typically intentional here. Until the latter parts of the 20th century leadership tended to be primarily thought of as predominantly male (not to mention white and Anglo-American) in its characteristics; this is scarcely surprising given the preponderance of men in formal positions of authority in organisations even where the workforce is mostly female (e.g. the English NHS – Smith, 2009). Thus, whilst, the "great man" account may be academically unfashionable and the crucial traits difficult to isolate – see below – the characteristics of being white, male and over 5' 10" tall still seem central to being Chief Executive of an American Fortune 500 company (Gladwell, 2005); if leadership is equated with holding the most senior organisational role, then leaders are still to a significant extent "born".

Furthermore, the residue of trait theory can be discerned in more recent accounts of leaders. Transformational leaders, for example, are often argued to possess charisma (this argument is outlined in further detail later) as one of the characteristics that appear in leadership qualities frameworks promulgated at the turn of the 21st century (see Davidson & Peck, 2005, for some UK public sector examples). Moreover, in this public sector, the "great man" approach is evident in New

Labour's proposal for "super head teachers" in education (Judd, 1996) where an individual apparently successful in one organisation can be given responsibility for another that is perceived to be failing. These individuals were touted as the answer to the issue of failing schools, despite evidence that: "the capacity of the head teacher to influence the value-added scores, and thus the quality of learning in a school, appears to be minimal" (Searle & Tymms, 2007: 33). Such an approach possesses appeal for politicians, public and the organisation concerned; that a special individual might deploy their personal gifts to do extraordinary – perhaps "heroic" – things to solve a "wicked" problem such as a "failing" school. Further, this mitigates the need to do something more systemic and long-term (and also usefully locates the blame if the anticipated transformation fails to materialise).

Whilst the "great man" perspective was inherently attractive to those occupying leadership positions in the early part of the 20th century, and arguably well beyond, for those lacking the "special gifts" to be in such positions this was less of an attractive proposition. As social deference diminished, and the professional middle classes started to rise to authoritative roles in larger and more or less meritocratic bureaucracies (Perkin, 1989), the "great man" idea lost some of its appeal.

Most academics are by both nature and nurture sceptical, and especially suspicious of theories that seem to favour elites in society. As a consequence, this theory has attracted repeated criticism over time. As Reicher *et al*. (2005: 550) suggest, "[N]owadays such theories have few academic adherents". One widely observed problem with the "great man" theory is the lack of consistency in the types of traits which have been identified. In fact, almost as many traits have been identified as there have been studies undertaken. Stogdill (1948, 1974) analysed more than 124 studies conducted between 1900 and 1948 and another 163 that were completed between 1948 and 1970 and concluded that some traits did appear more often than others (outlined in Box 2.1), but that overall there was a great deal of variation within this literature. In the light of our argument in Section 3, it is interesting to note the presence of the ability to influence the behaviour of others and a sense of personal identity amongst these traits.

Writing over a quarter of a century later, Northouse (2004) concludes that there are five major traits which tend to be associated with "great man" leadership (intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability), but notes that this list is not all-inclusive. Although these traits may have a high degree of face validity – that is, they are what we might expect or want to see from effective leaders – they are

Box 2.1 Recurrent leadership traits

- Strong drive for responsibility
- Focus on completing the task
- Vigour and persistence in pursuit of goals
- Venturesomeness and originality in problem-solving
- Drive to exercise initiative in social settings
- Self-confidence
- Sense of personal identity
- Willingness to accept consequences of decisions and actions
- Readiness to absorb interpersonal stress
- Willingness to tolerate frustration and delay
- Ability to influence the behaviour of others
- Capacity to structure social systems to the purpose in hand

(from Stogdill, 1974: 81)

also the types of characteristics which any number of individuals might display without them necessarily being considered a leader.

Other traits which make a common appearance within the "great man" literature – in keeping with the name of the theory – are masculinity and dominance (Mann, 1959). Gardiner (1995) suggests that all leaders are good storytellers. Charisma is also suggested to be an important trait of leaders (see Bryman, 1992). Lord *et al.* (1986) found that the traits identified by Stogdill, in conjunction with that of intelligence, impacted on the ways in which individuals perceive leaders. This is an interesting point. Given that the "great man" approach is largely focused on specific gifted individuals, this account acknowledges that the reason they are described as "good" leaders is due to how they are perceived by followers. However, this is one of few examples where followers are specifically considered within trait approaches to leadership and reflects the fact that Lord and colleagues were writing at a time when followership had already started to appear in the literature (it also is one of the first studies that postulates what comes to be termed an attributional dimension to leadership).

Given the range of traits suggested as characteristic of "great men", it is difficult to know which the "right" traits are or, indeed, whether leaders need to possess all of these traits or just a sub-set. A number of researchers have gone as far as to suggest that there is simply no reliable evidence of any traits which either distinguish leaders from

non-leaders or that are able to predict, in their terms, leadership effectiveness (Jenkins, 1947; Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Nadler & Tushman, 1990). It is interesting to note the longevity of the search; not all psychologists gave up easily on this quest. Nonetheless, although those that came along in later generations were likely to be in search of very different sorts of characteristics, the theoretical and methodological tradition established by writers on "great men" proved to be very robust; the individualist and positivist focus of the psychology paradigm – the pursuit of the essential features – in leadership studies had been established.

In practice, this lack of consensus about traits tended to mean that when it came to selecting leaders a necessarily subjective notion of the most important characteristics was typically employed. Consequently, suggestions arose in the literature that an effective leader in one context might not be as successful in another setting. This also goes some way to explaining why such extensive lists of traits, often with little overlap, were developed in the first place. This trend in bringing the specific context into the leadership equation gave rise to the next prominent approach to leadership, one to which we now turn.

Early situational approaches

In contrast to trait theory, the situational approach suggests that leadership styles have to be adapted as a response to the demands of a given situation. Therefore, it is contextual factors which determine who emerges as a leader not the innate traits of an individual. Initially these theorists argued that "great men" were a product of the particular situation that required them to step forward (for example see Schneider, 1937; Murphy, 1941). A classic example of this early situational approach is outlined in studies of Winston Churchill (e.g. Currie, 1997).

Churchill had an illustrious family history, extensive personal talents and substantial experience within both the military and government; yet, at several points in his career he found himself shunned by party hierarchy and/or public opinion, not least in the 1930s (see Jenkins, 2001 for further details on Churchill's life). After being appointed Prime Minister in 1939, he became – and largely remains – a national hero, only to be subjected to a landslide election defeat in 1945. Morgan (2001) suggests that the content and the tone of Churchill's personal campaign failed to reflect the post-war needs and aspirations of large swathes of the population and "a mood of 'never again' amongst electors who sought guarantees that the unemployment, stagnation, and defeat-

ism of the thirties would not return" (p. 28); we shall return to the importance of leaders' emotional tone in Section 3. It has also been argued that the man who succeeded Churchill – Clement Attlee – was not well known to the British public and almost appeared too taciturn to be a national leader (Beckett, 2000). Nevertheless, Attlee arguably oversaw the greatest transformation of British society in recent times through the establishment of the modern welfare state.

What this brief description of Churchill demonstrates is that these situational accounts of leadership still considered traits as a crucial factor in terms of who emerged as leaders. Situations may change, but the personalities of leaders, by and large, do not. In a similar vein, and with obvious connections to McGregor (see below), Fiedler (1964, 1967) could be seen as the last exponent of the early situational position by arguing, perhaps rather simplistically, that leaders have a tendency towards either task-orientation or relation-oriented leadership. This distinction is still used by some leadership researchers today (for example, Ekvall & Avronen, 1991; Sellgren *et al.*, 2006). Over time, this strand of thinking evolved into personal-situational theories that maintained that some aspects of leadership are due to the situation, some result from characteristics of the individual leader and others are consequent on the interaction of the two (Bass, 1960); we shall return to these later. At present, it is sufficient to note that this account established the key relationship between the context and the leader; much of the subsequent history of leadership theory has focused on the attempt to define that relationship.

Psychological profiling

After the Second World War, there was a renewed energy given to trying to determine the causes of such events, including the ways in which they affected, and were affected by, leadership behaviours. At the same time, the influence of writers such as Freud – who came to live in England in 1938 (Gay, 1988) – and Jung – who had lectured in the UK and USA (McLynn, 1996) – and the organisations formed by their followers were having a significant influence on intellectuals across numerous fields (including commercial activities such as advertising which were influenced by the still popular motivational theories of Herzberg (1966) and Maslow (1954). Whilst there were significant differences between these schools, overall their focus was mostly on the psyche of the individual.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, particularly in a setting where psychologists were becoming increasingly centre-stage, many commentators

concluded that leadership was based on factors which kept the focus on the individual: the inter-relations between individuals (Likert, 1961); individual motivation (Maslow, 1954); and the interdependence between individuals and organisations (Blake & Moulton, 1965). One durable example of this approach – in many ways also a throwback to the ideas of the early situational theorists – is provided by McGregor (1960) who proposed that leadership style is influenced by leaders' fundamental assumptions about human nature. Theory X managers take a negative view of human nature and believe that the average person dislikes work and will avoid it if possible. Theory Y managers believe that the expenditure of effort at work is natural and that under the proper conditions the average human learns not only to accept, but also seek, responsibility. Thus, Theory X leaders believe that in order to make people work, coercion and control is required, whilst Theory Y leaders seek to encourage ingenuity and problem-solving. Theory X leaders will tend towards being autocratic, whilst Theory Y will prefer a participative style.

The importance of this theory – despite being what Western (2008: 30) terms a "polemic over-simplification" – is that it is still cited in much contemporary leadership literature (e.g. Gill, 2006) and presented as a useful framework in many leadership development programmes. Its longevity is interesting. Initially, perhaps, a stimulus for more participative styles of leadership – and maybe a forerunner of the ideas that would come to fruition in transformational leadership – it also has the virtue of the simplicity of the binary construction which recurs in leadership studies from Fielder through Myers and Briggs to Burns. Many leaders have little time to expend on exploring sophisticated ideas and their favoured gurus have flourished by keeping the message simple (and, in truth, what could be simpler than McGregor's binary theory?).

Whatever else, McGregor established in the imagination of generations of leaders the apparent importance of psychological profile to leadership, and thus the potential benefit of examining this profile in more depth. Arguably the best known psychological inventory – the Myers & Briggs Type Inventory – was initially put together in the 1940s (Briggs Myers, 2000) based on Jung's theory of personality types (although some commentators, e.g. Garden, 1991, highlight that this inventory is not fully consistent with his theories). Whilst not explicitly designed with a focus on leadership, the MBTI soon became commonplace in leadership development programmes (see Conger, 1992) and is still widely used today (Kiel *et al.*, 1996).

Based on a self-completed questionnaire, the tool produces results on four binary dimensions of personality: extravert or introvert; sensor or

intuitor; thinker or feeler; and, judger or perceiver. Putting together the four that score highest in each pair produces the profile (e.g. extravert, sensing, thinking, perceiving – ESTP – one of the combinations whose organisational impact is described in Hirsh & Kummerow, 1998). Whilst participants are typically encouraged to recall that these are only preferences – thus the approach avoids the charge of psychological determinism that could be levelled at the earlier situational theorists – this is frequently lost on participants for whom their MBTI profile can become a modern day equivalent of their zodiac sign. For example, Moore (1987) reports participants returning from MBTI workshops and posting signs on their desks saying something like "ESTP spoken here". Indeed, even practitioners can seem to overlook this caution; Hirsh tells us her type is ENFP and Kummerow that her type is ESTJ (1998).

A range of other tools are available which also suggest a "type" for an individual (for example the FIRO-B test (Schnell & Hammer, 1993) and Belbin's role inventory (Belbin, 1981). However, as a consequence of this focus on "type", these kinds of approaches can seem to represent a return to a more sophisticated form of trait theory, with the focus still fairly and squarely on the intra-personal. It is also important to note that profiling techniques such as the MBTI are not designed with an evaluative purpose; that is, there is no "type" which represents a better or a worse kind of leader (Kroeger & Thuesen, 1992). At the same time, research has suggested that some "types" are more common in senior organisational positions than others. For example Williams (1998) found that military leaders in the US were most frequently found to be ISTJ personality types, although women leaders (who were underrepresented in this sample) were more varied in terms of the types they favoured (a pattern also reported by Stokes, 1987a, b).

This neutral stance, that there is no particular "type" that makes a better leader, has not been maintained in the texts on the importance of the inner self that have followed in recent years. Developed out of the burgeoning self-help literature of the late 20th century and, again, not necessarily focused on leadership, "emotional intelligence" (that is, the ability to perceive, assess or manage the emotions of self and/or of others) (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1996, 2000) now looms large in most accounts of the topic (e.g. Maturano & Gosling, 2007). George (2000) stresses the importance of four aspects of emotional intelligence to leadership: the appraisal and expression of emotion; the use of emotion to enhance decision-making; knowledge about emotions; and the management of emotions. A veritable industry has grown-up around this idea, including a number of psychometric measures that purport

to access emotional intelligence (e.g. Goleman, 1998) and these dimensions loom large in many contemporary frameworks for leadership, not least because of their influence on transformational leadership. As with earlier versions of trait theory, however, there is a problem in the research evidence about EI in prescribing consistently the factors that are important to the construct (see Matthews *et al.*, 2002, who describe the claims made on its behalf as "extravagant and hyperbolic" (p. 466)) and there are similarly problems with correlations between scales of measurement of emotional perception (Mayer *et al.*, 2008).

Despite these theoretical concerns, all of these more recent approaches presume that by gaining insight into their psychological profile, individuals might be able to change their profile and/or their behaviours; thus their popularity on leadership development programmes as they provide a starting point for such discussions. Furthermore, the very successful promulgation of concepts such as EI has served to keep the attention of leadership theorists firmly on the level of the intra-personal, at least until the last decade. Indeed, our own account of leadership does assume that efficacious leaders – in the definition deployed in the Prologue – do exercise significant control over their own personal emotions in attempting to set the appropriate emotional tone within which authority can be enacted (see Chapters 5 and 6 for more discussion and examples). The focus on the behaviour of leaders has had a life of its own, however, prompted in part by the growing focus on the relationship between leaders and followers, and we consider these next.

Behavioural approaches

During roughly the same period discussed above, a number of writers took further the idea that the interaction between the person and the situation was of paramount importance and at the same time started to raise the profile of followers. As we have seen so far, "great man" and psychological approaches stressed personal over situational factors; early situational approaches attempted to balance situation and personal whilst not seeing much room for flexibility in either. What behavioural approaches have in common is that they tend to consider leadership as a contingent product of both personal and situational factors (Gibb, 1958), where there is the potential for change in both.

One such is Path-goal theory (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974) which suggested that successful leaders show their follower(s) the rewards that are available and the paths (that is, the behaviours) through which these rewards may be obtained. This theory outlines a series of assumptions about how various leadership styles will interact with the charac-

teristics of followers and the work setting to affect the motivation of followers. This suggests that leaders need to choose a style that best fits the needs of followers and the work they are doing. So, for instance, where followers are dogmatic and authoritarian and task demands are ambiguous and organisational procedures unclear, a directive style of leadership is best (similar to McGregor's Theory X). Alternatively, where tasks are unstructured, unsatisfying or frustrating, leaders should use a supportive style (similar to McGregor's Theory Y). Path-goal theory also identifies two further types of leader behaviour: participative and achievement oriented. A participative approach is helpful when followers are autonomous or a task is ambiguous because participation can give more clarity over how particular paths lead to particular goals. Achievement orientated leadership is helpful, it is maintained, when tasks are both ambitious and ambiguous; such an approach helps followers feel that their efforts will result in effective performance. We are here in such close proximity to motivational theory that House's account – and some of those that follow next – could be argued to be more to do with motivation than leadership; that is, we may be exploring methods of generating commitment that actually do not require the exercise of leadership at all (at least as we define it in this book).

Although path-goal theory clearly considers the roles of followers, it is a one-way relationship, with leaders only attending to the needs of followers in the achievement of their goals. It assumes a dependent relationship between followers and leaders (and theories of transformational leadership have been criticised for similar reasons). Consistent with previous theories of leadership, there is also only limited empirical support for the validity of path-goal theory (Schriesheim & Neider, 1996).

The emphasis on the adaptation of leadership style to suit the context – in House's case the nature of the task and the follower – marks contingency theory out from the situational theorists. Later, Vroom and colleagues (Vroom & Jago, 1988; Vroom & Yetton, 1973) elaborated this theory by postulating that three factors should influence the choice of leadership style:

- the degree of structuring of the problem;
- the amount of information available to underpin the analysis of the problem; and
- the quality of the decision required.

Picking up again on the relational issues, Hersey and Blanchard (1969, 1977, 1988) add an additional variable: the readiness of followers to accept leadership. This research team suggested that the level of

development of followers should have the greatest impact on leaders' approaches; as followers mature, leaders should adapt their relationship from a more directional style through coaching and supporting to delegating (and, once again, the accessibility of the four box presentation of this account is surely one of the keys to its popularity).

Whilst this is a fairly narrow understanding of context, much more so than the NDIT perspective introduced in Chapter 3, the increasing interest in the idea that leaders should (and can) adapt or select their leadership style dependent on situation is still a significant move away from the individual focus of previous theories to a more relational perspective. Nonetheless, the limitations are significant. For example, the definition of context pays no regard to the constraints imposed on leaders by the pre-existing patterns of authority, accountability and procedures within organisations (Giddens, 1993) that we will explore in the next chapter. Furthermore, it does not encompass Grint's (2005a) notion that leaders can shape the perception of context which is also examined in Chapter 3.

These elaborations on contingency theory have also moved us some distance from the "is" in the direction of the "ought" – prioritising prescription over description – which is arguably a feature they shared with conceptions such as EI. As a consequence, common theories of leadership articulated up to and including the 1990s were capable neither of adequately explaining the concept of leadership nor of generating sufficient research evidence in their support. The field was ready for a new big idea; it came in the form of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership

Although the term transformational leadership was originally coined by Downton (1973), Burns (1978) is normally cited as the source of this concept. Once again, the attraction of a binary contrast is fundamental to the theory; in this case, Burns distinguished between transformational leadership and transactional leadership. In this contrast, transactional leadership is presented as focusing on the exchange element (e.g. paths/rewards) of leadership highlighted by the behaviourialists. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, occurs when "one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose" (Burns, 1978: 20).

According to this perspective of leadership, therefore, leaders tap into the motives and morals of followers in order to enable them to reach their own goals and those of their leaders. That is, leaders stimulate and inspire followers to achieve outcomes and, in the process, also develop their own leadership capacity. Bass (1990) provided what has become the definitive list of characteristics of transformational leaders in their relationship with their followers: individualised consideration; intellectual stimulation; inspirational motivation; and idealised influence (or charisma as it sometimes described – see Bass *et al.*, 1987). Although there is some emphasis on the relational aspect of leadership here, the focus is still very much on the leader and the description (or is it prescription?) of his or her special qualities. In this respect, transformational leadership shows its debt to the notion of charismatic leadership. Shortly before Burns' *Leadership* was published, House (1976) outlined a theory of charismatic leadership which became very popular during the next two decades. On this account, charismatic leaders: are dominant; have a strong desire to influence others; are self-confident; and have a strong sense of their own moral values.

In many respects, this signalled a return to the era of the "great man" theories, and perhaps for not dissimilar reasons. Where the arrival of the 20th century in Europe was accompanied by the growth of industrial companies and global empires (and consequent conflicts in many parts of the world), in the latter decades of that century these countries were facing crises in many of those very companies with repeated restructurings and redundancies. In these difficult times, charismatic leadership was seen as a way to offer the prospect of confident and compelling models of authority. As a result, the charisma of chief executives was a cause for celebration in the 1980s (e.g. Peters & Waterman, 1982) and a cause for concern 20 years later in the wake of a number of corporate scandals (Mangham, 2004). Along the way it was also challenged by Collins (2001) who found that enterprises successful over the long term have much more modest chief executives than the theory suggested, linking to notions of servant leadership first articulated by Greenleaf (e.g. 1970) and by Spears (1995) which had a checklist of ten characteristics of its own (e.g. listening, empathy and commitment to the development of followers). We shall suggest later that reliance on charisma is – in most organisational contexts – a sign of weakness in a leader and not of strength. Consequently, charismatic leadership has lost some of its academic credibility (Kets de Vries, 2004) (if not its popular salience as evidenced by the high public profile of many chief executives and their steady flow of autobiographies).

Nonetheless, what it brings onto the horizon is the way in which followers' sense of self may be closely tied to their perceptions of leader and organisational identity.

The distinction between transformational and transactional leadership is often suggested as solving another knotty problem in much of the literature: the difference between leaders and managers. In these accounts, leaders are transformational and managers are transactional (e.g. Zaleznik, 1992; Dubrin, 2004); the former do the right thing, whilst the latter merely do the thing right (e.g. Bennis, 1994). Of course, not all commentators either share this enthusiasm for the trope of transformation (e.g. Collins, 2001) or distinguish leadership from management on this basis (e.g. Bass & Avolio, 2002; Fullan, 2001).

Transformational leadership has gained enormous popularity, almost inevitably spawned a self-assessment tool (e.g. Bass, 1985) and generated some fairly dramatic claims about the potential of this type of leadership. For example, Dvir *et al*. (2002: 736) state, "transformational leaders exhibit charismatic behaviours, arouse inspirational motivation, provide intellectual stimulation and treat followers with individual consideration. These behaviours transform their followers helping them to reach their full potential and generate the highest levels in performance". Transformational leaders are also suggested as strong role models for their followers; again, picking up on its antecedents in charismatic accounts, it is argued that they create a vision which gives followers a sense of identity within an organisation and a sense of self-efficacy (Shamir *et al*., 1993).

However, there are significant weaknesses with the theory. Given its continuing fashionable status, it is worth listing these:

1. The implausible suggestion that the words and actions of leaders can transform either followers or organisations in the absence of other interventions; we shall develop this challenge further in Chapter 3.
2. Linked to the first, and well expressed by Keeley (1995): "[I]f not all social participants have the same goals, if transformational leaders are not able to persuade everyone to voluntarily accept a common vision, what is the likely status of people who prefer their own goals and visions … transformational leadership produces simply a majority will that represents the interests of the strongest faction" (p. 77). Accounts of transformational leadership are typically silent on the use (and misuse) of organisational power; as Andersen (2006) rather brusquely puts the point: "[M]anagers in business and in public agencies do not have followers … managers have subordinates" (p. 11).

3. The consensual nature of organisations assumed by this theory – consistent with much of the writing on organisational culture that arose simultaneously – treats followers as a rather abstract entity without any consideration of context; transformational leadership is in that respect another essentialist and universalist account of the phenomenon (Smith & Peterson, 1988).
4. It is much less clear than some earlier theories – such as the behavioural accounts – as to what leaders actually should do, a line of criticism perhaps best articulated by Yukl (1999).
5. It has led to the development of lists of leadership qualities that can look over-aspirational and, on occasions, just plain fanciful (for example, Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Boje & Dennehey, 1999 respectively).
6. The evidence base is contested. For example, Currie *et al.* (2005) conclude from their study of heads and deputy/assistant principals in UK schools: "no single leadership approach … is linked to better school performance … principals combine a number of leadership approaches, so that any boundaries between one leadership approach and another become blurred and overlapping" (p. 289).

Despite these significant concerns, the transformational trope has served to draw attention of some commentators to two often overlooked aspects of leadership, (both of which are highlighted by Grint 2005b). Firstly, the identity of a leader – charismatic or otherwise – is relational rather than individual, attributional as opposed to essential; that is, "leadership is a function of a community not a result derived from an individual deemed to be objectively superhuman" (p. 2). Secondly, leadership has to be embodied; "leadership is essentially hybrid in nature – it comprises humans, clothes, adornments, technologies, cultures, rules and so on" (p. 2); that is, it has to be performed. We shall return to these points later.

Of course, the advent of transformational leadership does not mark the end of leadership theory. Perhaps the most important of the theories that have emerged in the 21st century focuses on leadership as sensemaking (Fullan, 2001; Pye, 2005). As this account is an important step on the path to our own approach – performative leadership – we will discuss it in more detail in Chapter 3.

Leadership theory and leadership development practice

In a much cited review of the literature on leadership development, Day (2000) argues that whilst leadership development is gaining increased

interest (particularly among practitioners) there is "conceptual confusion regarding distinctions between leader and leadership development, as well as disconnection between the practice of leadership development and its scientific foundation" (Day, 2000: 581). This quote highlights an apparent gap between leadership theory and leadership development practice. Day suggests that leadership development has traditionally been conceptualised as the nurturance of skills in individuals and, therefore, much leadership development has actually been *leader* development. In other words, there has been a tendency to invest in the human capital of particular individuals but a failure to develop the collective leadership capacity of an organisation; the focus has been on the growth of "'individual capabilities such as those related to self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation that serve as the foundation of intrapersonal competence" (Day, 2000: 605).

Another perspective on the practice of leadership development, however, is that it has been very closely connected to leadership theory. Indeed, as we have shown above, many of the major theories of the last 50 years have been accompanied by diagnostic tools that have been explicitly designed – or subsequently developed – to inform the development of leaders. Furthermore, as most of these theories, and thus their accompanying tools, have focused on the characteristics of individual leaders it is scarcely unsurprising that development programmes have concentrated on creating leaders with these characteristics (as opposed to ones that stressed the relational aspects of leadership).

In order to highlight this point, Table 2.1 summarises the theories that we have introduced above and the leadership development approaches that are suggested by them, drawing on Day's classification. Great man, situational, psychological and behavioural approaches have focused on the individual and thus entail little emphasis on the development of the interpersonal. Although transformational accounts acknowledge the importance of the interpersonal, in practice there has been a tendency to focus on individual leaders and the types of behaviours or characteristics that transforming leaders are described – more commonly prescribed – as demonstrating. This has resulted in a rather limited version of "transformational" leadership being promoted in practice. We shall return to the implications of sensemaking – and the performing of leadership – for leadership development in Section 4.

In a similar vein, Bolden and colleagues (Bolden *et al.*, 2003; Bolden & Gosling, 2006; Bolden *et al.*, 2006) carried out extensive research examining the theories of and data on leadership and how these compare to the various leadership models and frameworks used

Table 2.1 Summary of major approaches to leadership and implications for leadership development

Approach	Emphasis	Development implications
Great Man	Personal Traits	Few, leaders are born not made but any attempts to nurture these traits focus on the intrapersonal
Situational	Context dependence	Can develop a focus on the interpersonal to some degree, but tendency towards determinism means that leader should move situation
Psychological profiling	Psychological traits	Strong emphasis on the intrapersonal and very limited attention to the interpersonal
Behavioural	Actions appropriate to specific followers and tasks	Development of the intrapersonal, although influenced by understanding of relationship with followers and nature of tasks
Transformational	Relationship between leader and followers, but where followers are rather abstract	Stronger emphasis on the interpersonal but development of the intrapersonal still predominates in focus on the traits and behaviours of leaders
Sensemaking	Relationship between leaders and followers, but where followers are tangible and influential	Development of the interpersonal and intrapersonal in equal balance

across a range of public and private sector organisations. Most strikingly, they note a significant amount of similarity across these models and frameworks. Furthermore, although most go beyond simple definitions of behaviours and consider some of the cognitive, affective and interpersonal qualities of leaders, the role of followers is usually recognised in a rather simplistic manner. The team conclude: "[L]eadership, therefore, is conceived as a set of values, qualities and behaviours exhibited by the leaders that encourage the participation, development, and commitment of followers … The 'leader' (as post holder) is

thus promoted as the sole source of 'leadership'. He/she is seen to act as an energiser, catalyst and visionary equipped with a set of tools (communication, problem-solving, people management, decision-making etc.) that can be applied across a diverse range of situations and contexts. Whilst contingency and situational leadership factors may be considered, they are not generally viewed as barriers to an individuals' ability to lead under different circumstances (they simply need to apply a different combination of skills)" (Bolden *et al.*, 2003: 37). The focus, therefore, is firmly on the individual.

As we have already suggested in the course of this chapter, there are a range of difficulties with the notion of "the leader" as it appears throughout these leadership frameworks. They suggest that leadership is the output of a multi-talented individual with diverse skills, personal qualities and, hopefully, a well calibrated ethical compass. In most respects, this seems little more than an elaboration of trait theory where the list of necessary leadership attributes has reached frankly intimidating proportions (see Davidson & Peck, 2005, for some examples from UK public services). These approaches are essentialist – treating individuals and contexts as fixed dimensions of a world discoverable through scientific research – and universalist (i.e. applicable in all social or cultural settings – see Fernandez, 2004, for a recent example of the genre). We elaborate further on the both of these points in Chapter 3.

Leadership and the pre-eminence of the psychological paradigm

Given the importance of leadership to 21st century society and organisations, which theoretical framework predominates in this field matters. It shapes our notions of what leaders should be able to do, who are suitable people to be leaders and how they might be developed; for many of us, conceptions of leadership influence profoundly who we think we are and how we believe we should behave.

Despite the vast resources of human ingenuity which have gone into prescribing and describing the nature of leadership over the last hundred years, it remains an apparently problematic topic. As this chapter illustrates, although numerous theories of leadership have held sway at different times, none have managed to give a sufficiently compelling account to see off the competition; moreover, there is also a new theory lurking just around the corner. Of course, this theoretical cornucopia is only a problem if we believe that there should be – indeed, could be – a definitive account of the phenomenon; if that assumption is discarded then

the range of accounts of leadership might almost be seen as one of its strengths. Moreover, it may then be an area which could more comfortably accommodate accounts of leadership from other cultures (Prince, 2005).

Our observation that the discipline of psychology – and its adherents in organisational studies – have "dominated the leadership field in recent years" (Wood & Case, 2006: 139) is, as this quotation shows, not new (see also Collinson & Grint, 2005; Burns, 2005; Jones, 2006; Fairhurst, 2007 for further examples). However, the exploration of the impact of this dominance is relatively recent. Furthermore, it has become apparent that the psychological paradigm has shaped not only the ways in which leadership has tended to be conceptualised and researched but also the interventions designed and delivered for its development. What is the basis of the challenge that has arisen in the first decade of the 21st century? At heart, the accusation is that psychology has treated leadership as another modernist project; that is, the approach has been overwhelmingly reductionist, objectivist and rationalist in nature (Lawler, 2005; Ford & Lawler, 2007; Western, 2008).

Pye (2005) concurs with Mitroff (1978) that much of the effort that has gone into developing our understanding of leadership to date may have been directed at solving the wrong problem. Wood and Case (2006) argue that the same kinds of refrains continually appear within the leadership field: "[I]n most cases, discussion of 'leadership' and 'leaders', besides being predictable, is connoted by a numbingly familiar conception of the individual subject: the leader conceived as a hero (there is marked gender bias in the language of leadership) possessing a variety of powers, attributes and 'competencies' that enable him [sic] to bring about transformative effects within his [sic] domain of influence" (p. 139). Lawler (2007: 108) further characterises mainstream leadership literature as privileging, "rationalism and its ensuing scientific methods and ignoring the non-rational aspects of leadership and organizational life; and that it is concerned with reducing leadership to a restrictive set of features".

This critique faces a stern task to gain a firm foothold. Psychology is a vast discipline incorporating a wide range of sub-fields. Its influence on leadership studies is underpinned by significant research funders, institutes and journals that produce large amounts of theory and evidence. The concerns and techniques of mainstream psychology have tended to reflect modernist scientific approaches which endeavour to employ experimental research methods in order to uncover "objective truths" about the nature of the world. Typically, these involve hypothesising

correlations between two or more sets of factors and then testing for their presence using a tool administered to a small sample and, where a correlation is established, extrapolating from the results. One example of this approach will have to suffice to illustrate this technique.

Skinner and Spurgeon (2005) seek to explore the relationship between "four distinct but related individual dispositions, namely empathic concerns (EC), perspective taking (PT), empathic matching (EM) and personal distress (PD)" (p. 3) and then postulate that the first three will "positively relate to transformational leadership behaviour … [I]n contrast these three measures were expected to show no relationship to transactional leadership behaviour … and to be negatively associated with laissez-faire leadership" (p. 3). The tool, comprising of no less than four instruments, was returned by 96 Australian healthcare managers and 563 of their subordinates. After the application of some statistical techniques, the authors demonstrate that the anticipated correlations were confirmed and they confidently state that "the results support the role of empathy as a correlate of leadership" (p. 5). It is assumed that the four individual dispositions and the three forms of leadership describe "real" concepts whose relationship will be revealed by the application of the chosen instrument. Whilst building on previous authors in the psychological orthodoxy (e.g. Bass, Goleman, Salovey and Mayer), the authors seem to have constructed the dispositional factors for themselves whereas the leadership styles are taken directly from the literature.

It may be labouring the point to dwell on the shortcomings of this particular chapter, but they are, in our view, symptomatic of the wider tradition. We have already seen that the distinction between transformational leadership and transactional leadership is contested (and laissez-faire leadership is an odd concept which describes the absence of leadership); there is no suggestion of that contestation here. More significantly, given that one of the supposed characteristics of transformational leadership is "individualised consideration", it is perhaps not really surprising that it correlates strongly with descriptions of empathy; arguably they are if not the same then closely related variables.

As we will demonstrate further in Chapter 3, distinct disciplines of academic study reify particular views of what can be counted as scientific knowledge. Overall, and as Skinner and Spurgeon (2005) exemplify, psychology has tended to be dominated by positivistic research techniques which have, in turn, become the norm within much leadership studies. In other words, it is not necessarily the case that leadership researchers fail to make a, "conscious (political) choice to adopt

positivism but that it is more of a default option" (Symon & Cassell, 2006: 310). It is buttressed by its own profession (occupational psychology), institutions (e.g. Tavistock Institute) and journals (e.g. *Leadership Quarterly*). In these circumstances, it is not overstepping the mark to describe the psychological model of leadership as having the hallmarks of paradigmatic status described by Kuhn (1962).

For Kuhn, a paradigm is a theory which attempts to explain aspects of the world in a consistent and comprehensive manner to the exclusion of other theories. Feyerabend (1978) challenges Kuhn's view that a paradigm will be abandoned when it ceases to explain observed phenomena adequately. Rather, he suggests, a paradigm will be defended beyond the point at which problematic observations which are difficult to accommodate within the predominant theory should have led to the formulation of alternative explanations. In these circumstances, Feyerabend argues, new paradigms will have to be nurtured and promoted in the face of antagonism from the supporters of the existing paradigm. It may be that this to some extent describes the position of leadership studies as we approach the second decade of the 21st century.

It is important to stress again that we are not saying that the history of leadership theory and research has been a fruitless endeavour. The modernist approach has told us a lot about leadership in a range of different contexts. As Ford and Lawler (2007: 410) suggest, "[O]ur understanding of the phenomenon has been greatly enhanced by studies following this orthodoxy but the dominance of the approach in studies of leadership, focussing on quantitative empirical methods, has resulted in a relative dearth of qualitative approaches. Thus there is still much for us to understand about the leadership process". We would broadly concur with Lawler's later (2008: 31) formulation; our critique does not seek "to decry individual leadership models, or the individual leader: both have their place. The difficulty arises when either is seen as universally applicable. They thus become restrictive – the direct opposite of the flexibility which leadership is intended to achieve". At the same time, and as Feyerabend (1978) shows, paradigms are not overthrown by polite and rational argument alone.

The crucial point here is that within any given paradigm a number of social, cultural and institutional factors influence approaches to theory and, therefore, the methods and outcomes of research around that theory. These become so predominant that they are typically "unseen". So, in addition to quantitative research techniques, what are the "unseen" assumptions that underpin the broad psychological project in leadership studies and, as a consequence, what are the alternative conceptual

approaches that have been largely squeezed out? We will briefly examine two here (and return to both in more detail in Chapter 3): the prioritisation of agents and their ideas over societal and structural influences; and, the acceptance of the self as a tangible and consistent entity.

Psychology tends to award a high degree of prominence to individual agency at the expense of institutional forces. Mainstream psychology is more concerned with the capacity for human beings to make choices and to impose these choices on the world than it is with the norms, accountabilities, procedures or institutions which might shape the choices of individuals. As a consequence, it is also more focused on the ideas of individuals – and how they might be influenced by the ideas of other individuals – that appear to underpin such choices rather than the role of the social setting in which they are expressed. As a consequence, most leadership studies have concentrated on identifiable individual leaders and the kinds of behaviours and characteristics they present and the cognitive processes behind their thoughts and actions.

This approach was highlighted above in the observation that behavioural theories both draw attention to and yet have a very narrow concept of context. In one popular version (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) the notion of context is restricted mostly to the maturity of followers, neglecting the social, cultural, technological and other factors that may shape behaviour. This limitation is also illustrated by the Skinner and Spurgeon (2005) paper, where arguably the authors neglect to discuss at least two important aspects of research context: firstly, that the health setting might produce more empathic leadership behaviour given that it is taking place within a system created to care for others; and, secondly, most of the leaders were located in rural Australia, presumably in small communities, where there may be a range of personal and social relationships that influence leadership behaviours in the workplace. Overlooking such factors is not an oversight on the authors' behalf; rather it is necessary to identifying essential and universal characteristics of leaders. No one would deny that the personal qualities of leaders are important. However as Bolden and colleagues (2003: 37) argue: "[T]he manner in which these qualities translate into behaviour and group interaction is likely to be culturally specific and thus depend on a whole host of factors, such as, the nature of the leader, followers, task, organisational structure, national and corporate cultures etc."

This agency-structure dichotomy (albeit that the psychological paradigm pays scant attention to the latter) is far from the only dualism found in the field of leadership studies. In fact, as noted above, much of the leadership literature is beset by binary divisions, such as: task or

relationship; leadership or management; leaders or followers; born or made; transactional or transformational; IQ or EI; and so on. Yet Cowsill and Grint (2008: 188) suggest that, "most of these are not simply inaccurate descriptions of a complex reality but positively unhelpful to ensure organisations run effectively because they encourage false choices". We suggest that it is the dominance of psychological approaches within the field of leadership that has encouraged such "false choices" and, as such, has contributed to the pouring of so much effort in attempting to address the balance between them. We would speculate that dualism was built into much psychology from its inception as a consequence of the Cartesian thought-experiment that differentiated the mind from the body.

Psychology tends to conceptualise the notion of personal identity or self (we use these terms interchangeably in line with van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2005) as coherent, bounded and separate from the physical self. Through much of its canon, however, that the debate about the nature of self is one of the cornerstones of Western philosophy is largely overlooked. Traditionally, the self has been discussed as an issue both for the philosophy of knowledge (if I cannot be sure who "I" am then how can "I" be sure about anything?) and the so-called mind-body question (what is the relationship in the brain between physical processes and mental processes?). It is not our intention to rehearse the history of the debate here, although we will say more in the next chapter; rather, it is only important to draw out the two main conclusions about these two topics that formed the basis of common conceptions of the self until well into the 20th century. The first received view that has permeated much subsequent thinking is the familiar assumption that "the self is a single, simple, continuing, and unproblematically accessible mental substance" (Gallagher & Shear, 1999: ix); that is, it is the "I" of "I think therefore I am". The second inherited position, with its roots deep in Western Christian thought, is the idea that, whatever their relationship, there are two distinct entities – the mind (or the soul) and the body – where it is the former that constitutes the self. Ryle (1949) goes so far as to call this the "official doctrine… of philosophers, psychologists and religious teachers" (p. 13).

Most modernist scientific disciplines – including psychology – have typically assumed these conceptions of the self. As a consequence, many of the constructs and interventions that inform contemporary leadership theory and development take for granted that the self that is being discussed – for instance, in concepts such as self-esteem – has these two characteristics: firstly, that the individual self is coherent and consistent; and secondly that the mental self exists distinct from its physical

embodiment. As such, Zaleznik (1992: 127) describes leadership as a, "psychodrama in which a brilliant, lonely person must gain control of himself or herself as a precondition for controlling others". In another example, Gill (2006), in his recent account of the interventions of The Leadership Trust, treats the notion of the self as completely unproblematic; that is, in his view there appears to be one unitary self (and it is both knowable and changeable in predictable ways). He explains that: "the outcome (of The Leadership Trust's approach) is increased self-awareness, followed in turn by increased self-control, self-confidence and self-realization as a leader" (p. 279, parentheses added). In a recent paper arguing the theoretical case for the importance of authentic leadership – one of the more recent additions to the gallery of leadership models that we explore further in Chapter 10 – Harvey *et al.* (2006) draw on a number of major academic authorities in the psychological pantheon to convince readers that "[A]uthentic leaders are described as leaders who possess self-awareness" (p. 1). One group of such authorities (Gardner *et al.*, 2005) argue that it consists in "*acting* in accordance with one's true self" (p. 344).

In the broader psychological literature, of which the leadership writings are obviously only a sub-set, the importance of the self has loomed large over the last 30 years, much of it related to the exploration of "dispositional attributes" and the way in which these may enable individuals to become more aware of, and then to change, their behaviours. Leary and Tangney (2003) suggest that, having explored the many uses of the term self by psychologists, "we arrive at the human capacity for reflective thinking … we think that it is useful to regard the self as the psychological apparatus that allows organisms to think consciously about themselves" (p. 8). Overlooking the apparent tautology that lurks within, this definition exposes a number of characteristics of the psychological enterprise in relation to the self: firstly it is instrumental, focusing on the apparent usefulness of this perspective; secondly, it is colonial, claiming the territory of the self for students of psychology; and, thirdly, it is temporal, suggesting that the self is present in moments of self-reflection. In Chapter 3 we reflect on these three characteristics in more detail.

However, at this stage it is also important to note that the notion of self within the wide discipline of psychology is not quite as straightforward or unproblematic as we have briefly presented it to be here. It has been of major interest in psychology since the turn of the 20th century (Leary & Tangney, 2003) and there are tens of thousands of theoretical and empirical articles published within psychology journals. Those critical of the generalisation presented here may suggest

that we have simply drawn on particular areas of psychology to create a psychological "straw man". We acknowledge that certain areas of psychology (largely from the sub-field of social psychology) are developing notions of the self in leadership development that are more dynamic; indeed, we draw on some of this work in the chapters that follow (e.g. Lord & Hall, 2005; Day & Harrison, 2007; O'Connor & Day, 2007).

Nonetheless, we maintain that within the psychological paradigm prominence has been given to treating the mental self as an ontologically distinct entity which exists independently of, and separately to, the physical self. We expand further on this critique in Chapter 3 where we introduce arguments from other academic traditions which draw attention to the intellectual lacunae in the dominant paradigm and yet have played only marginal roles in discussions of leadership to date. Suffice to say at this stage that many of these arguments challenge the key assumptions that there is an essential self and that is distinct from the physical self. It is now time to present these in more detail.

3
The Dogs that Rarely Barked: Alternative Conceptions of Leadership

Introduction

Let us start with an eloquent summary of much leadership theory to date constructed by Kakabadse and Kakabadse (1999: 1):

> *From the ancient philosophers to Hobbes and Nietzsche, to current scholars, finding out what makes the visionary hero, the superman, the great man or woman, tick, has become an obsession. Through assumption, predisposition or just painstaking research, the search has been on to identify those elements that lead to superhuman drive, a sharp eye, a decisive mind, all of which put together generate in an individual a force that makes for an extraordinary impact. The hope is that once these attributes are isolated, they can in turn be replicated and through training or other means, be inculcated in others.*

In the previous chapter we sought to demonstrate that mainstream leadership studies and much leadership development have been dominated over the past hundred years by the discipline of psychology. Whilst this has produced some benefits, especially in terms of what we know about the particular characteristics of individuals in very specific contexts, there are also considerable disadvantages of treating leadership as a modernist project predominantly concerned with the identification (and improvement) of aspects of the self.

In this chapter we draw from the intellectual traditions of anthropology, sociology, philosophy, cultural studies and organisational theory to introduce some of the alternative conceptions of leadership that are available. Overall, these enable us to challenge the individualistic focus of the psychological enterprise through a more relational perspective

which highlights that previous accounts seriously underplay context, and are also reluctant to engage with the importance of organisational power and authority. In this process, we provide evidence to substantiate our view that much "objectivist" psychological research is imbued with a range of assumptions and values which have been detrimental to the creation of a more rounded and plausible account of leadership.

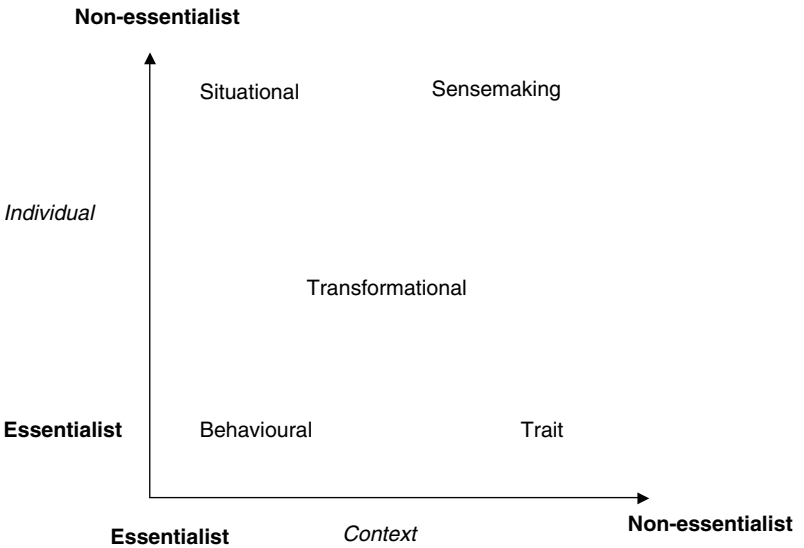
Of course, and like psychology, each of these traditions represents both extensive and diverse areas of study, comprising numerous and not always consensual branches. It is beyond the wit of the authors and the word limit of the publishers to give an exhaustive account of these disciplines; our selection of aspects of them is purposive and focuses on those elements which we believe will reveal most about leadership. We start with a critique of the essentialism of much leadership theory before moving on to explore leaders, followers and their relationships prior to an examination of self and identity. The next part of the chapter looks at context, social structure and institutional theory, and it is here that we introduce NDIT. The final part of the chapter looks briefly at the overall implications for leadership theory and leadership development of the ideas that we have introduced.

Essentialism

As shown in Chapter 2, leadership theory and research have been dominated by attempts to objectify leadership; this is, to identify the essential characteristics of individual leaders (Bryman, 2004; Lawler, 2005). Underpinning many such studies is a belief that a definitive "reality" exists and that by employing the right sorts of tools and techniques this independent reality can be ascertained and reported. These types of approaches are often described as "essentialist" in nature; they assume that we can acquire a definitive or objective account of what we are investigating. In considering leadership, these approaches typically aim to distil the "essences" of leaders in relation to their personal traits (e.g. high intelligence), and/or their behaviours (e.g. individualised consideration) and/or their context (e.g. the maturity of followers).

Figure 3.1 draws on Grint (1997) in setting out the leadership theories outlined in Chapter 2 in relation to essentialist and non-essentialist accounts of individuals and context. As this figure demonstrates, trait theory can broadly be generalised as treating individual characteristics as essential; that is, there are specific definitive and identifiable aspects of individuals which are crucial to leadership irrespective of context. Situational leadership considers objective aspects of context as critical (i.e.

Figure 3.1 Essentialist and non-essentialist leadership



(Adapted from Grint, 1997: 4)

certain types of contexts require particular forms of leadership). The theory of leadership offered in this text sits broadly within the sensemaking family that we discuss in Chapter 4 (albeit, we maintain, with a more plausible account of context than most accounts in that school contain).

Of course, the critique that originates from within non-essentialist accounts of leadership can be overstated. It is fine to maintain that the search for objectivist and standardised accounts of the world is inadequate as it can never fully account for the nuances of the human experience (Cooper, 1999); however, theory in social sciences has to make generalisations from the particular as do other forms of science. Furthermore, whilst sensemaking in the leadership literature may have adopted a constructivist perspective, it would be misleading to suggest that all exponents of the approach – including Weick himself – were fully signed-up social constructionists.

Nonetheless, subjectivist approaches (such as those associated with the leadership as sensemaking genre) seek to incorporate more of the complexity of human experience into their accounts by drawing attention to specific forms of relational or social dynamics around leadership. As suggested in Chapter 2, the types of essentialist accounts

which have tended to dominate leadership studies view individuals as entities that have a clear separation between their own internal selves and the external environment in which they operate. As such, a high degree of individual agency is afforded to individuals; "organizational life is viewed as the result of individual action" (Hosking *et al.*, 1995: x). Reality is presented as being produced by individuals who control the order of things within the external environment. Thus, even relationships are explained by the properties and behaviours of interacting individuals or organisations (Dachler & Hosking, 1995).

These types of approaches have been critiqued widely within sociology and philosophy due to their rather static notions of "being". In particular, by adopting a stance which focuses so heavily on human agency, they ignore the potential impact of social influences. In contrast, unsurprisingly, sociology has tended to emphasise the impact which social influences have on individual agency. As Côté and Levine (2002: 12) explain, "by merit of their disciplinary mandate … psychologists are more interested in what happens 'inside' individuals… and sociologists are more interested in what happens 'inside' societies". Côté and Levine (2002: 13) go on to note that, "psychologists study mental processes and related individual actions, whereas sociologists study social structures and related individual actions. Their common interest is in how people behave (individual actions), but this does not mean that social structures can be reduced to (i.e. fully explained by) mental processes or that mental processes can be reduced to social structures". The following paragraphs explore what a more social perspective on leadership might bring to the debate.

Leaders, followers and relationships

The most obvious problem with an individualistic conception of leadership is that without followers (and we shall say more about the potential distinction between followers and subordinates later in this chapter) there is no leadership. Historically, however, most accounts of leadership have neglected followership. Where followership is considered, it is typically restricted to describing the types of outstanding qualities which followers attribute to leaders. This was clearly illustrated in Chapter 2 in our account of great man theories of leadership with its significant – and still resonant – focus on trait theory.

Arguably, one of the reasons why Burns' *Leadership* (1978) proved so significant at the time – and continues to have an influence some 30 years on – is that it suggested that both leaders and leadership

scholars needed to pay more attention to the needs, wants, motivations and influence of followers. Nonetheless, although transformational leadership outlines a strong role for followers, in practice most attention is focused on individual leaders (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001).

Harter *et al*. (2006) seek to underpin the difference between "leader" and "follower" by arguing they are entirely distinct by definition; "[T]he distinction between the two terms has considerable usefulness. [I]t obviously means something." (p. 275). Thus, Harter and colleagues contend that because a terminological difference exists between leader and follower then this represents a "social fact". Leaving to one side that discourse analysts would probably dispute the idea that linguistic difference constitutes "social fact" (and it is interesting to note that this observation is made by Harter and colleagues only in reference to the English language), there are a range of implications which follow on from this reflection.

For example, it is not just that leaders and followers tend to be considered separate entities within this conceptualisation, rather as Collinson (2006: 180) puts it, "studies have typically concentrated on leaders as if they were entirely separate from those they lead while followers have tended to be treated as an undifferentiated mass or collective". This separation suggests a relationship where the leader is a special, sometimes almost super-human, individual and followers simply a group who do not warrant individualised status (and the robustness of this suggestion is examined in depth in Chapters 7 and 8). Such a distinction seems to hark back to the great man account of what makes leaders conspicuous in comparison to others. As Peart and Levy (2003: 2) observe, "the Leader is different from the Follower" and that "difference" implies "superiority". Clearly what is being suggested here is that there is marked inequality between leaders and others; with leaders holding influence over followers but no current in the opposite direction. This conception seems to assume – in NDIT terms – a hierarchical setting (see below) in which followers are also subordinates (which would have been the case for many of the great men studied in early research).

We consider the issue of power and leadership in more detail in the next chapter, but here we will outline the contours of a debate over whether leadership is a function of individual leaders or of a wider community. Grint (2005a) argues against individualisation and suggests that the identity of a leader is drawn from a relational, rather than an individual, function: "leadership is a function of a community not a result derived from an individual deemed to be objectively superhuman" (p. 2). Indeed, Heifetz (1994) maintains that the study of

leadership is not just simply about leaders themselves; what distinguishes successful from unsuccessful leaders is their ability to motivate and mobilise followers to effectively engage and discharge their responsibilities for the combined success of the collective (an important insight which resonates with our own account of leadership). Gronn (2005) suggests that the tendency of scholars, such as Shamir *et al*. (e.g. 2005), to refer to singular leaders creates a misleading impression that, "regardless of the historical truth of the matter, there is, and to all intents and purposes can only ever be, one leader" (Gronn, 2005: 488). Therefore, individualising leadership theories may potentially mask the contributions of others within the group and thus present an incomplete account of the range of leadership processes at play within any given situation (and we shall suggest that this diversity is reflected in the NDIT account of context).

The underlying argument here is that leadership is a product of a wider social system and not simply of individual actors. O'Toole (2001: 18) describes "leadership as an organisational trait" and Drath (2001: 15) regards leadership as the "property of a social system". Thus, leadership is not an innate thing in and of itself; rather leadership is a process which only takes place because particular words and actions are recognised as leadership and as such constitute leadership in a specific social setting. Drawing attention to this wider community highlights the importance of the institutional arrangement – in its broadest sense – in which leadership is exercised.

This point brings us back to the discussion of self which we introduced in the previous Chapter. Cluley (2008) argues that, "[I]n psychological terms we might say that leaders have been conceived as autonomous individuals, whereas followers grouped in a herd" (p. 203). Leadership studies have focused heavily on the self-concepts of leaders but the self-concepts of followers have remained underexplored (Hall & Lord, 1995; Meindl, 1995; Lord *et al.*, 1999). Yet, it has also been suggested that the way in which all individuals perceive themselves, their self-concept or identity, strongly informs their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, goals and behaviours (Leary & Tangney, 2003). This has two important implications for the efficacy of leadership. Firstly, there is evidence that leadership which can influence follower self-conception might influence follower attitudes and behaviours (Shamir *et al.*, 1993; Lord *et al.*, 1999). For example, where a leader outlines a course of action which is consistent with the self-concept of a follower, it may be more influential on his/her behaviour than if it conflicts (Lord *et al.*, 1999). Secondly, it has been suggested that where followers identify strongly with a group it becomes less important that the leader can demonstrate "typical" leader characteristics

and more important that the leader is perceived to be representative of the views and beliefs of the group (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003; Lord & Brown, 2004).

It would seem, therefore, that there is evidence even within the social psychology literature that the social identity of followers holds great salience for the potential efficacy of leadership; this is a theme we shall return to throughout this chapter. However, as we suggested in Chapter 2, traditional psychology has typically treated the notion of self as a bounded and coherent entity which seems to exist separate to the social self. We now want to draw on alternative traditions of academic study and analyse the ways they have treated notions of self and identity.

Self and identity

That the debate about the nature of the self still rages within the broad British philosophical tradition – one that can be traced back to Hume (1969) almost three hundred years ago – should in itself give us pause for thought. Two recent contributions will serve to illuminate the polarities of this debate. Parfit (1984) expresses his refutation of the notion of the essential self robustly, suggesting that although we might be "strongly inclined to believe that our continued existence is a deep further fact, distinct from physical and psychological continuity … [T]his is not true" (p. 281). Shoemaker (1997) summarises the opposite position: "[U]nity of consciousness is explained in terms of 'ownership' of different experiences by … a separately existing entity" (p. 135).

Even one of the most committed recent defenders of the concept of the unitary self – Galen Strawson (1997) – makes two concessions to the many doubters amongst his philosophical peers. Firstly, he allows, adopting a position not dissimilar to Parfit (1984) and Searle (2004), that there are "phenomena that lead us to think and talk in terms of something called the self, whether or not there is such a thing" (p. 406). Secondly, and more importantly, he concludes that the self exists only in short units of time – often vanishingly brief units of time – in relation to specific circumstances; as a consequence, the "I" is really a sequence of many mental selves, each one following on, but nonetheless distinguishable, from the last manifestation. As he argues: "my central claim remains … one can have a full sense of the single mental self at any given time without thinking of the self as something that has long-term continuity" (p. 420). He calls this his "pearl view, because it suggests that many mental selves exist, one at a time and one after another, like pearls on a string" (p. 421).

The image is arresting. However, Strawson's focus on the pearls means that he gives less consideration to the string. Perhaps the postulation of a string is based upon some acknowledgement of recognisable threads of mental responses and physical behaviours that seem to recur through these many mental selves. Parfit (1984) – in maintaining that there is no such separate entity as the self – suggests of what the string might consist: "my continued existence just involves physical and psychological continuity" (p. 279), where there are varying degrees of connection between these physical and psychological events over time. As Shoemaker (1997) puts the point: "we have psychological continuity when a person remembers his earlier deeds or experiences, or when an intention formed at one time is fulfilled at a later time or when there is persistence of psychological traits over time – and psychological continuity consists in there being a chain of overlapping psychological connections" (pp. 135–136).

Of course, there remain philosophers in their own tradition that contest the arguments of both Parfit and Strawson and wish to sustain the more familiar notion of the essential self. The important point to emerge from the philosophical discourse is that the essentialist conception may have been common in popular discourse but that does not mean that it is unproblematic in theory. At the very least, and drawing on both Strawson and Partfit, there is a plausible argument that we have, at most, a series of consecutive selves more or less related over time through the connectivity of physical and psychological continuity.

Sedikides and Brewer (2001) argue that rather than there being one self, there are three fundamental self-representations: the individual self; the relational self; and, the collective self. Thus, this perspective argues that people achieve self-definition and self-interpretation (which they describe as identity) in three ways: a) in terms of their unique traits; b) in terms of dyadic relationships; and, c) in terms of group membership. All these three selves co-exist and make up the way individuals present themselves and are interpreted within the social world. How we are seen by others is therefore influenced by not only our innate personality traits, but also our most significant relationships (spouse, children, family etc) and the types of groups we are members of. Although this analysis does incorporate social aspects of identity into the conceptualisation of the self, it does still presuppose a unique, identifiable self which exists within individuals.

Drawing on what he terms "scientific personality research", McAdams (1997) seems to support the idea of a series of consecutive selves, arguing

that individuals have "personal myths" which develop through time. McAdams suggests that although individuals have specific traits, which they might be more pre-disposed to at some points than at others, these are not sufficient to describe an individual's identity due to the large range of confounding contextual factors which might intervene. So, although an individual might be predicted to behave in a particular way within specific social settings, their behaviour might be quite different due to other social forces. As such, in order to really understand an individual's sense of identity, one must hear the narratives which create their "personal myths"; we shall return to this suggestion shortly (and also in Chapter 10).

In Chapter 4 we discuss post-modernism and social constructionism in some depth. For now, it is enough to note that there is much which emerges from these ideas which suggest the self is, for example: "a fragmented being who has no essential core of identity and is to be regarded as a process in a continual state of dissolution rather than a fixed identity or self that endures unchanged over time" (Sim, 2001: 312). For many intellectuals in the latter part of the 20th century, the essentialist self was exposed as a construct of the modernist project. Hall (1996) captures the central tenet of these arguments:

> *… identity does* ***not*** *signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change… identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions …Precisely because they are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies*. (Hall, 1996: 17)

For sociologists – indeed for the social sciences more broadly – the idea that society demands its members to play a number of roles in a variety of social settings (at work, in families etc.) has been commonplace since at least the 1960s (e.g. Goffman, 1959). As the title of this work – *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* – suggests, Goffman seems to challenge the notion of the essential self (although, despite the title, the nature of the self is not his major concern). As Goffman (1959) expresses the point: "[A] correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation – this self – is a *product* of a scene that comes off, and is not a *cause* of

it. The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location …; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented" (p. 245, italics in original). Schechner (2006), discussing this performance of the self from within the intellectual school of performance studies, develops Goffman's analysis to suggest that "a person's sense of self is very much tied to her ability to believe in the roles she plays. [T]he matter is complicated because the roles are not played by a single, stable self … the self is created by the roles even as it plays them" (p. 217). There is much of value to leadership studies in the work of Goffman and we draw on his insights further in setting out our thesis of leadership in the next chapter and in Section 3.

Of course, other recent writers on leadership have also picked up on these ideas (what would fall under Sedikides & Brewer's rubric of relational and collective selves). In a discussion of the nature of identity and leadership, Grint (2000) argues that individuals do not have a single "true" identity waiting to be discovered, rather there are only "different interpretations that construct, rather than reflect, the phenomenon" (p. 12). This contrasts with much social identity theory (e.g. Hains *et al.*, 1997; Hogg *et al.*, 1998; van Knippenberg *et al.*, 2000; Hogg, 2001; Platow & van Knippenberg, 2001; Pierro *et al.*, 2005) which still largely considers identity as residing within the internal personal consciousness of individuals. Some social psychologists may suggest that self is not simply a monolithic structure but instead a confederation of self-schemas derived from past experiences (Markus & Wurf, 1987); this is an important strand of thinking and deserves brief exploration.

Van Knippenberg *et al.* (2004), whist acknowledging that the self is not uni-dimensional, argue that "the self may be seen as a collection of modular processing structures (self-schemas) that are elicited in different contexts or situations" (p. 827). In other words, as suggested above, according to this conception we have a number of concurrent and consistent selves, where we can distinguish our self as parent from our self as employee: "which part of the self-concept will be activated is dependent upon cues … for instance, a person's identity as a daughter or son may be salient when they receive a phone call from their father, and their identity as an employee may become salient when a colleague enters the room" (p. 827). Within this construction, each of these parallel selves can then be seen as unproblematic (much as the single self was previously), so that many of the established interpretations – such as self-awareness in a leader – and interventions – for instance, the many assessment tools designed to illuminate aspects of the self as organisational leader – are protected; in effect, the multiplicity of the

post-modern has apparently been reconciled with the unitarism of the modern.

However, although such conceptualisations do start to consider social influences as important, this is still largely an essentialist analysis. Given that the predominant focus of psychology – and social psychology – has tended to be the individual and their mind, such studies still concentrate on and afford predominance to the inner psyche over and above social forces (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Thus, although structural factors are being taken into consideration in this analysis, they are still not being afforded the same degree of influence as the inner psyche of individuals in the formation of the notion of self. Even though this analysis considers multiple selves, these are still selves that exist in a "real" sense as perceived from the inner mind of the individual.

Van Kippenberg and colleagues produce an undeniably attractive proposition. It seems to us, however, that if the notion of the unitary self is, at the very least, open to question, then the notion of a series of pre-existing, parallel, self-contained and mutually consistent multiple selves is also unconvincing. Firstly, it suggests that there are boundaries between these individual self-concepts which are distinct, can be prompted by specific cues and where subjects can readily switch from one to another; the apparent neat and tidiness of this framework is directly challenged by Hall (1996) who suggests that different senses of self are "intersecting and antagonistic" (p. 17). Secondly, it still stands apart from the idea, articulated by Grint (2000) in relation to leadership, that leaders emerge and succeed because they construct, and continue to reconstruct, versions of their own and their followers' identities; van Knippenberg *et al*. (2004) seem to continue to deny the central premise in the quotation from Hall (1996) cited above which is also expressed by Holstein and Gubrium (2000): "[T]he self … is not only something we are, but an object we *actively* construct and live by" (p. 10, italics in original). Finally, it might be suggested that the concurrent selves that are suggested – parent, employee – look remarkably similar to Goffman's roles, an observation that might make the sociological critique even more telling.

These more recent conceptions of multiple selves constructed in the process of social interaction have also opened up some new lines of research within organisational studies. For Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) this recent strand of so-called identity work "refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising" their narratives about themselves in an attempt to achieve "a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (p. 1165). Their extended case study of one manager concludes: "she [the subject of the research] cannot avoid

being located in work situations implying different, indeed contradictory, notions of self" (p. 1187, parentheses added). From a study of the stories that local authority managers tell about their own identities at work, Ford (2006) contends that her work "offers insight into the competing, multiple, contradictory, and complex identities that can characterize part of managers' identities … with individuals adopting a range of subject positions, at certain times fragmented and contradictory, at others connected and convergent" (p. 96). Notwithstanding the methodological weaknesses of these accounts, they seem to suggest that managers experience their consecutive, social and episodic senses of self as contradictory rather than consistent. Smith (2009), in arguably a more robust study of the career narratives of ten female NHS Chief Executives, talks of the six dilemmas that she argues they articulate. All of these studies should carry Boudens' (2005) caution about narrative analysis: "[S]tories are, of course, attempts to persuade…there is not objective recounting of the facts against which to evaluate how and how much the narratives are embellished" (p. 1303). Nonetheless, and overall, these empirical studies seem to support the theoretical account of Hall rather than that of van Kippenberg and his colleagues.

Kondo's (1990) earlier study of Japanese women's stories of their lives serves to remind us that the narratives of individuals are shaped by the setting within which they are framed. She maintains that they are "the product of a complex negotiation, taking place within specific, but shifting, contexts, where power and meaning, 'personal' and 'political', are inseparable. Identity is not a fixed 'thing', it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations" (p. 24). Holstein and Gubrium (2000) make a similar point when they suggest that, as narrators "actively craft and inventively construct their narratives, they also draw from what is culturally available, storying their lives in recognisable ways" (p. 103). We are back once again in the territory of context and culture.

Leadership, context, culture and social structure

In Chapter 2 we noted that there is a tendency to decontextualise both leadership studies and the development of leadership. Most of the exponents of transformational leadership neglect context almost entirely. The traits of transformational leaders from Bass (1985) to Alimo-Metcalfe (1998) – individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealised influence – have been presented as

virtually identical almost regardless of context (see Bolden *et al.*, 2003; Bolden & Gosling, 2006; Bolden *et al.*, 2006; Davidson & Peck, 2005 for discussions of the similarity of recent leadership frameworks across sectors); indeed, this is one of the claimed strengths of the model. Moreover, in practice, most leadership development programmes are designed and delivered outside of the organisations within which participants usually operate (and thus these practitioners have precious little incentive to stress context). Where context is highlighted in theory, it is typically a very narrow conception; for House and colleagues it is the nature of the followers and for Vroom and his collaborators it is the type of problem to be solved.

As noted above, such an individualised notion of leadership is problematic when viewed from the perspective of intellectual traditions which suggest that leadership is a function of a collective process rather than being innate (or developed) within a single individual. However, there is a further, albeit related, influence on the conceptualisation of leadership as an individualist endeavour which goes beyond the psychological paradigm. This is partially recognised by Gold *et al.* (2003: 9) who note, "[I]ndividualised, single agent notions of leadership also accord with strong orientations towards individualism in Anglo-American cultures". The vast majority of leadership studies have originated from the United States and the United Kingdom, countries which have strongly individualistic cultures when compared to those in other countries and continents (Prince, 2005). Lawler (2008) – amongst others – has suggested that the bias towards individualistic studies of leadership – when alternative formulations have been available – is a product of the preferences inherent in Anglo- American culture (although we must be wary of an apparent essentialism creeping back into the argument here). Thus, the critique of the relative neglect over the last century of the context for leadership is two-fold. The claim is that leadership studies have not paid sufficient concern to: firstly, the significant variety in organisational contexts in which leadership is exercised; and, secondly, the influence of the contexts within which these theories have been produced.

Of course, leadership has not recently been "discovered"; there are writings over three thousand years that contemplate this phenomenon. Many of these are found outside of the 20th century Anglo-American axis (e.g. ancient China, Confucius, 1963; ancient Greece, Plato, 1992; and Renaissance Italy, Machiavelli, 1991, and, interestingly, several of them focus on relational, rather than individualistic, aspects of leadership). As a consequence, the recent rise in the volume of published outputs around

leadership in English might itself be considered a specific cultural phenomenon and indicate that it is perhaps not a subject of such universal contemporary interest as might first appear. Drawing on texts from sociology and cultural studies, Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008: 30) draw our attention to the notion that much of the theorising about leadership has taken place either in a Western context (for example Trompenaars, 1993; Yukl, 2002) or from a masculine perspective (Olsson, 2002; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002; Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2002) or, indeed, from both simultaneously (van der Boon, 2003).

As Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) ably demonstrate, and as we have also outlined in Chapter 2 , the origins of leadership studies have a significant impact on the ways in which it is studied and the values with which such studies are imbued. For example, Bjerke (1999) charts how US concepts of leadership have projected cultural and organisational accomplishments onto individuals who are subsequently elevated by society and imbued with a mythology as a consequence of these accomplishments. The history of the USA, he argues, is full of such mythical heroes from the hunter-trapper to the Indian fighter and from John Wayne to several US Presidents (a point eloquently made by Gil Scott-Heron, 1981 in response to the election of Ronald Reagan). Bjerke is suggesting that leadership researchers replicate and reify these cultural notions in looking for particular factors; in other words, the attribution of the qualities of leaders can be made by social groups as much as by individual followers (and the attributions of the latter will be significantly influenced by the attributions of the former). Of course, Bjerke's focus on the US as one entity equates culture with country in a manner which may be misleading; in so doing, attention is also drawn away from the cultural analysis also applying at a more fine grain level to states, sects, towns etc.

Furthermore, Alvesson (2002) argues that neither the perspective that leadership is crucial in terms of organisational success nor the belief that leadership is an individualistic enterprise is shared across other areas of Europe: "[W]ith the risk of overgeneralizing too much, it is a common impression that while North Americans seem to rate leadership favourably, many Europeans may be mildly less enthusiastic. US society seems to favour an ideology of celebrating individualistic, strong masculine characters that can lead" (Alvesson, 2002: 94); however, some major events in 20th century Europe seem to suggest that he may well be overstating his case. Nonetheless, looking at differences in concepts of leadership across countries does reveal some interesting divergences. Project Globe (House *et al.*, 2002) conducted an in-depth analysis of leadership across 62 countries. It found that although some characteristics may

recur, the ways in which these are expressed and interpreted often differ between countries (although we are still a little reluctant to equate country with culture in this argument). Thus, the argument runs, the specific national setting in which leadership is being exercised may give rise to differences in how – and whether – certain aspects of leadership are enacted.

Taken together then, at worst, the Anglo-American idea that the phenomenon of leadership might be amenable to being broken down into a set of component constituents which are universally applicable across a range of organisational and geographical contexts might seem to represent a form of intellectual neo-colonialism. If these models are strongly country-specific, their introduction outside of the UK and US – in particular in a period of organisations with increasingly global reach – might be interpreted as an attempt to shape other territories (geographical, cultural and disciplinary) through application of these models. Indeed, this has been recorded in relation to other types of work practices. In a study of the offshoring of services from America and Europe to areas such an India and China, Bryson (2007) documents how this shift in labour has impacted upon the identities of call centre workers who are required to "become" American or European during their working hours.

Let us return to the first point of the critique; that is, leadership studies have not paid sufficient concern to the significant variety in organisational contexts in which leadership is exercised. The argument is that institutional settings define what kinds of actions and behaviours are legitimate, but also how certain actions, deeds or words might be interpreted. Thus, organisational context restricts the options available to leaders; as Schreyogg and Hopfl (2004) observe: "in work organisations, the actor is constrained by context, role and script, with a limited capacity for … improvisation" (p. 695). This theoretical perspective, commonly known as institutional theory, denies that the agent – in our case, the leader – has the freedom and autonomy implicit in most accounts of leadership; that is, styles of agency are a consequence of the institution. Furthermore, it suggests that the notions of context that are usually included in these accounts are so limited as to have little theoretical usefulness.

In a helpful generalisation of the theory, Frederickson and Smith (2003) state that "institutionalism sees organizations as bounded social constructs of rules, roles, norms and behaviours" (p. 71). They also summarise the main "schools" of institutional theory; while there are many variants of institutionalism (e.g. Lowndes, 1996; Steinmo *et al.*,

1992; Bulmer & Burch, 1998), they each conceptualise organisational structures as *arenas of action* which are defined by rules and roles and the existence of groups with different interests and resources oriented towards each other (Fligstein, 1997). We want to focus on one example which was originally developed from the field of anthropology; this version of institutional theory is what has been termed neo-Durkheimian institutional theory (NDIT).

As the name suggests, this account draws on the work Émile Durkheim, as developed by anthropologist Mary Douglas (e.g. Douglas, 1982) and

Figure 3.2 The basic forms of social organisation

ω *Social regulation*

Isolate ***Strong regulation, weak integration*** *Style of organisation*: heavily constrained individuals acting opportunistically, unable to sustain trust save perhaps with close kin *Basis of power*: domination *Strategy*: coping or survival-oriented behaviour, individual withdrawal *Authority*: weak, if any among dominated isolates, temporary celebrity; otherwise, temporary despotism	Hierarchy ***Strong regulation, strong integration*** *Style of organisation*: centrally ordered community e.g. bureaucratic organisation *Basis of power*: asymmetric status, rule- and role-based authorisation *Strategy*: regulation, control through systems of status based on role *Authority*: Status-based, paternalistic, but with rule-bound discretion (in Weberian terms, bureaucratic)
Individualism ***Weak regulation, weak integration*** *Style of organisation*: instrumental, entrepreneurial individuals e.g. markets *Basis of power*: personal control of resources *Strategy*: brokering, negotiating for control of resources *Authority*: power-based; authority derives from ability to define opportunities and bestow rewards (in Weberian terms, merchant adventurer)	Enclave ***Weak regulation, strong integration*** *Style of organisation*: internally egalitarian, but sharply marked boundaries with others; held together by shared commitment to moral principle e.g. sects, cults, movements, clubs *Basis of power*: constant personal and collective reaffirmation commitment Strategy: intense mutual support within enclave, confrontation of those outside *Authority*: in Weberian terms, charismatic, based on personal demonstration of marginally greater commitment to shared principle

υ *Social integration*

(adapted from 6 *et al.*, 2006)

her school. In *Suicide*, Durkheim (1951 [1897]) argued that there are two central dimensions along which forms of social structure vary. One is social regulation: the extent to which social life is governed by role and rule on one hand or, alternatively, by the outcome of voluntarily entered relations. The other is social integration: the extent to which individual persons are held accountable to larger collectives. Cross-tabulating these two dimensions yields a classification of the basic forms of social organisation (see Figure 3.2). The cross-tabulation defines the four basic types which have distinct, in the terms of Frederickson and Smith (2003), rules, roles, norms and behaviours. We will summarise briefly these four types here, drawing on Peck and 6 (2006).

Strong social regulation together with strong social integration provide the defining features of *hierarchical systems*. In a hierarchical order, each rank or status has its place, and is due the appropriate, but asymmetric, respect for its role in supporting the functioning of the entire system. The structure of social ties is dense at the top of the system, less so as one moves down the order.

In contrast, weak social regulation and weak social integration are the defining characteristics of *individualism*. Individuals can act with relative freedom and those who can exploit their own skill or luck, or who can exploit gaps in the social structure to act as brokers, will achieve greater status on the basis not of role but of personal achievement and control of resources. In such settings, there are sparse social ties thus exhibiting structural holes within which such brokers can operate.

Strong social integration and weak social regulation is the enclave, the club, the *clan* or the *sect*. Here, the voluntarily entered collective is held together only as long as shared commitment to some principle can sustain the complex systems of rules required to stave off both outsiders and schism. The boundaries of the voluntarily entered and sustained collectivity have to be defined fairly rigidly around membership of some kind, or else the enclave will quickly disintegrate.

Strong social regulation and weak social integration is the condition of the *isolate*. The isolate, being weakly bonded to others, lacks capabilities for collective action that all the other forms, even individualistically brokered systems, possess.

Each of these basic institutional forms will elicit a distinct worldview of thoughts and feelings (Feyerabend, 2000), a preferred set of metaphors or images (Morgan, 1983) and a prevalent method of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). The strong claim of institutional theory is that institutions sustain themselves precisely to the extent that they can secure people to think in institutionally prescribed ways; only thereby will sufficient

commitment be forthcoming from people to organise in the ways that the institution's principles call for (See Figure 3.3). Conversely, institutions define the bounds of the unthinkable, that which is too threatening to the institution to be permitted to be taken seriously. Each of these forms therefore produces certain styles of thinking and feeling.

There are two more important points to be made about this theoretical framework. Firstly, it is not a static classification but contains an account of how positive and negative feedback can change the balance between these ways of organising in given situations (see 6 *et al.*, 2006). Secondly, it recognises that most institutions will be hybrids of these basic forms, acknowledging that sustainable organisations may combine elements of all these four basic forms in their organisational settlements (what is often termed the principle of "requisite variety").

Thus, NDIT seeks to demonstrate that there is variation – albeit limited variation – in terms of organisational context and, as a result, different forms of leadership activities will predominate. As a consequence, it is implausible to assume that characteristics of effective leadership are universal. To give a simple example, efficacious leaders

Figure 3.3 Ritual forms associated with each basic form of authority

ω *Social regulation*

Isolate *Exemplar of style*: satirical stand-up comedy *Responses elicited when successful in its own institutional terms*: irony, ridicule, stoic will to endure *Responses elicited when less successful*: bitterness, sense of arbitrariness and banality	***Hierarchy*** *Exemplar of style*: procession *Responses elicited when successful in its own institutional terms*: respectful deference for status, self-worth from role, commitment, sense of security *Responses elicited when less successful*: demoralisation, confusion and bemusement at opacity and complexity of institutions
Individualism *Exemplar of style*: trade fair Responses elicited when successful in *its own institutional terms*: aspiration, excitement, controlled envy for competitive rivalry *Responses elicited when less successful*: insecurity, dejection at own defeat, frustration at what seems futile and self-defeating rivalry	***Enclave*** *Exemplar of style*: religious revivalist meeting *Responses elicited when successful in its own institutional terms*: passionate commitment, collective effervescence, passionate rejection of outsiders and those seen as insiders who have betrayed the institution *Responses elicited when less successful*: schism

υ *Social integration*

Source: Peck and 6, 2006.

with subordinates in a hierarchy – exercising positional authority – may well need to exhibit more transactional behaviours whilst efficacious leaders in a clan – exercising personal authority – may have to adopt more transformational approaches (and this analysis also suggests that such subordinates may commit to organisational direction through interventions that are not consequent on leadership). Looking forward to Section 3, this theory suggests that the stories told by successful leaders in individualist-style organisations (e.g. a management consultancy) will differ markedly from those narrated by successful leaders in a hierarchy (e.g. a school). It is also implausible, this theory suggests, that leaders alone will bring about significant changes in any organisational settlement; rather, it will typically require changes to the balance between social regulation and social integration within the current organisational settlement. Peck and 6 (2006) provide much more explanation of the theory and its implications and a number of worked examples derived from UK public services. Here, we re-analyse through the lens of NDIT three case studies based in a wider variety of settings drawn from the work of other authors.

Druckett (2007) interviewed 20 academics within a UK university to establish how they "make sense of and define their experiences of leadership" (p. 10). Through focusing on respondents' use of the metaphors of machine/army and business, she identifies considerable dissatisfaction with leadership adopting what NDIT would term a hybrid of a hierarchical and individualist ways of organising within the university. Implicit in this dissatisfaction is a reference back to a more enclave style of organising – the academy with its characteristics of weak regulation but strong integration – where leaders showed, for example, individual consideration to colleagues in their academic groupings. Overall, the almost unremitting ridicule she reports in the academics' comments on university leadership is indicative of the assertion of the isolate style as they come under stronger regulation but with integration weakened. As Druckett concludes, the research "has illustrated the extent of misfit between the prevailing leadership discourse and style, and the prevailing academic norms and values" (p. 32), where the introduction of the stronger regulation of the hierarchical way of organising is experienced by academics as "the imposition of increasing levels of surveillance and control" (p. 23).

However, the case study reveals that this university's leaders are not achieving these changes through the power of ideas – i.e. discourse and style – alone. They are, it transpires, also changing the nature of the accountabilities and norms within the institution; one academic notes

that "the annual cycle of performance review and reward reinforce a conforming managerial culture" (p. 20) whilst another is quoted as saying "*there are no proper facilities for staff to simply relax in*" (p. 21, italics in original). Overall, Druckett concludes: "[L]eaders are appropriating systems and processes that are counter to prevailing academic and values" (p. 32).

For our purposes, the case study also illustrates that the assertion, arguably the over-assertion, of the hierarchical and individualist ways of organising by senior management is generating negative feedback from the academics in the organisation. The consequences of not allowing the isolate and enclave approaches to contribute adequately to the organisational settlement may be having, or have in future, significant detrimental consequences for the university (e.g. in terms of motivation).

Furthermore, and as the institutional theory of organisational isomorphism would predict, the changes being implemented in this setting are being manifested in most contemporary higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK. Druckett (2007) summarises a number of papers which discuss this broader pattern when noting "critics of 'hard' managerialism suggest that it has become embedded in higher education practice and a discourse of performativity [here meaning efficiency] has replaced collegiality" (p. 3, brackets added). In the terms of NDIT, hierarchy and individualism are challenging enclave as the preferred way of organising across the sector in response to a range of social changes being framed as confronting the organisation (e.g. assumptions about economic competitiveness).

In another example, and deploying one of the alternative versions of institutional theory, Doolin (2003), cites Law (1994), in articulating an account of change in a New Zealand hospital that uses the notion of organizations not as stable and static social orders but as an "ongoing process of ordering" (p. 751); "[O]rganizations, then, can be viewed a set of ordering narratives that operate to generate complex social and material configurations" (p. 757) where these narratives include talk, text, people, machines, technologies, architectures etc.. This is an important observation, reflecting the position of most institutional theorists: organizational systems presuppose, mediate and reinforce particular social relations. Exemplifying another key idea of institutional theory – that the limited number of organisational settlements contribute to the adoption of similar innovations across sectors (institutional isomorphism again, see DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Abrahamson, 1996) – Doolin (2003) describes the same emerging emphasis on accountability and business within his target organisation as does Druckett (2007) (and with not dissimilar results in terms of alienation of some constituencies within the hospital).

Doolin (2003) focuses on the introduction of "clinical leadership" (itself imported from the UK) which was designed to appoint doctors to manage other doctors, replacing the previous collegiate approach (in NDIT terms, the enclave tendency) with a more overtly responsive (hierarchical) and business-like (individualist) approach. This change was enabled and stabilised, Doolin argues, by changes in accountability, technology and procedure.

In a third – and final – example, Heracleous (2006) analysed the UK arm of a global HR consultancy firm in search of evidence of distinct modes of discourse, the interrelation between them and the manner in which they might impact upon their organisational context. He locates this study firmly in the tradition of institutional theory by identifying two levels of discourse:

> *the level of* communicative action *discourse is constituted of communicative statements that occur in the process of social interaction. Agents can pursue their perceived interests, construct shared experiences and build interpersonal relationships, as well as express subjective experiences* … Discursive deep structures *on the other hand are quite stable, mostly implicit, and continually recurring processes and patterns that underlay and guide surface observable events and actions* (p. 1061, emphases in original).

He found three forms of discourse in the company: the dominant; the strategic (linked to the dominant discourse); and the counter discourse (antagonistic to the dominant, patterned in what it opposes but impotent in influencing its organisational context). He highlights Christmas speeches by successive Managing Directors as being highly symbolic in re-affirming the dominant discourse of "clients" and "success" (an interesting finding in the light of the importance of formal settings to the enactment of leadership performance discussed in Section 3, Chapter 5). In keeping with Giddens' (1984) account of structuration, this discourse constitutes "implicit, taken for granted, and usually unstated premises, acting as entrenched structures of legitimation in specific social contexts" (p. 1066). Its normative function serves to support or reject the communicative actions of employees. NDIT would suggest that the researcher is dealing here with an organisation with a strongly individualist way of organising; indeed, Heracleous notes that – in its strategic discourse – the consultancy firm was seeking to move away from its emphasis on "individualism". His description of the counter discourse – satirical images and captions, scattered, long-

term – could be interpreted as the presence of the isolate way of organising.

It is becoming apparent in these examples that, whilst it is centrally concerned with the relationship between agency and structure, institutional theory's overall account of social structure also sheds considerable light on the issue of organisational culture. Most accounts of culture assume what Meyerson and Martin (1987) call an *integration model* (e.g. Schein, 1985). This sees culture as something that an organisation possesses and which is therefore recognisable and consistent. Broadly speaking, this overarching concept of organisational culture – its norms, symbols, values etc. – can be seen within NDIT as a manifestation of the current organisational settlement. Heracleous (2006) describes an organisation within which the "discursive deep structure" seems to serve this integrationist function.

Of course, whilst this settlement may be shaped and maintained by the manner in which leaders frame their ideas (as Heracleous, 2006, exemplifies) these ideas are themselves significantly constrained by the social structure within which they are articulated (which is itself sustained by a number of factors, such as the predominant technology deployed in the organisation, as argued by Doolin, 2003). Thus, whilst the rhetorical approach of the leaders within Druckett's (2007) case study university may be more or less efficacious than those in other HEIs in framing for local academics the challenges and responses that necessitate a new organisational settlement in that university, it is only the local articulation of a frame currently being applied consistently across UK higher education.

A second approach identified by Meyerson and Martin (1987) – the *difference model* of culture – conceptualises culture as more pluralistic, with disparate cultures being held by different interest groups within the same organisation. Institutional theory would see these as representing the characteristics of the distinct ways of organising that comprise the organisational settlement (as exemplified in the contrast in views between leaders and academics in Druckett's study and between clinicians and leaders in Doolin's). There is a clear role here for organisational leaders to articulate the benefits of the current settlement or, indeed, to advocate for innovations in values, accountabilities and norms that will result in a new compromise between the four ways of organising. NDIT maintains that the expression of ideas by leaders may be a necessary condition in achieving change, but it will rarely be sufficient. We return in Chapter 8 to the suggestion that leadership is just one intervention amongst many that may generate commitment to organisational action or direction.

Of course, there will also be leadership within these disparate groups. Kim *et al.* (2004) suggest that culture acts as a moderator on the extent of followership that is exhibited; on their account, "if a leader's behavourial pattern is congruent with values shared by followers, the leader will be accepted and leaders and followers become interdependent" (p. 79). Thus, whilst in the new organisational settlement being negotiated across UK universities – the hierarchical-individualist hybrid way of organising – may be alienating many academics, it may also be generating enhanced followership for senior management from other stakeholders in these universities, such as members of governing bodies and staff in corporate services.

The third perspective discussed by Meyerson and Martin (1987) – the *ambiguity model* – considers culture to be more fluid than the other two, constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated between individuals within the organisation. These patterns of creation and re-creation may be constrained by the predominant ways of organising within an organisation, but this formulation offers the most prospects for the potential impact of agency within the institutional approach. Of course, for the individuals concerned, this may be the most compelling account of culture and gives space for the social constructionist notion that organisations *are* cultures rather than *have* cultures.

Overall, our version of institutional theory wants to give due emphasis to the importance of social structure on the discourse of social actors without lapsing into the determinism of which the theory is sometimes accused (that is, suggesting that individuals – in particular organisational leaders – can have no impact on that social structure). Indeed, we want to show in Section 3, the manner in which such leaders can enact their leadership such that they can shape the existing organisational settlements and – alongside innovations in accountabilities, technologies and procedures – create new organisational settlements and commitments. However, in so doing, we want to deploy NDIT to bring a theoretical robustness to the discussion of context that most accounts of leadership simply lack.

This account of culture also sheds light on the vexed issue of whether it is possible to manage organisational culture. Parker (2000) offers two conclusions from his review of the culture literature: the first is that "cultural management in the sense of creating an enduring set of shared beliefs is impossible"; on the other hand, he suggests that "it seems perverse to argue that the 'climate', 'atmosphere', 'personality', or culture of an organisation cannot be consciously altered" (p. 229). This conclusion seems to be borne out by all three of the case studies discussed above. However, it

is important to note, again, as illustrated by the university and hospital examples, that cultural change typically requires innovations in social structure in terms of alterations in accountability, technology and procedures (that is, in the organisational settlement – see Peck & 6, 2006, Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion of this specific point).

What does this all mean for leadership?

What do these critiques mean for the theory, practice and development of leadership? Taking these alternative academic traditions seriously means adopting very different lenses when considering leadership. Overall, rather than thinking of leadership in terms of individuals, it suggests leadership resides in relationships. What is as important as identifying (or developing) individual skills or behaviours – which may or may not be efficacious within particular situations – is thinking about the settings and processes within which leadership emerges (Dachler, 1992). Such an approach needs to acknowledge the importance of both social structure and individual agency and explore the inter-relations or "duality" (Giddens, 1979, 1984, 1987) between them. As Uhl-Bien (2006: 662) expresses the point, the important issues are:

> *How realities of leadership are interpreted within the network of relations; how organisations are designed, directed, controlled and developed on the bases of collectively generated knowledge about organisational realities; and how decisions and actions are embedded in collective sense-making and attribution processes from which structures of social interdependence emerge and in turn reframe the collectively generated organisational realities.*

We have also suggested in this chapter that the current prominent essentialist paradigm of leadership has tended to separate "individuals" out from "society" and locate the locus of leadership authority firmly within the self of the individual. This chapter has sought to explore the notion that the self is social and episodic rather than singular and continuous; it is a product of interactions in the social world. As a consequence, it is the attribution of leadership that shapes the leader's sense of self at least as much as the characteristics of the self produce the leader.

These arguments represent a significant challenge to the established conceptions of leadership. Their implications are to some extent taken up

by the accounts of sensemaking and leadership that have been appearing since the turn of the 21st century. Chapter 4 now examines these recent theories, placing them in the lineage of post-modernism and social constructionism in which they mostly belong before introducing the performative framework for leadership.

4

Performing Leadership: "is", "as", Enactment, Narrative and Audience

Introduction

The first two chapters in this section problematised the notion of leadership, drawing on ideas from disciplines outside of psychology which have tended to be less common within the mainstream leadership literature. We have suggested that leadership theory over the past hundred years has been predominantly a modernist project. Consequently, leadership research has tended to be dominated by research traditions which have sought to uncover "essential" truths about the nature of leadership. This has also influenced the ways that mainstream leadership theory, practice and development have thought about the nature of leadership, followership and notions of the self. Thus far, our argument has been that these established approaches are no longer (if they ever were) sufficient in informing how we might best conceptualise leadership and thus inform the practice of leadership and leadership development so that it is as useful as possible to individuals, groups and organisations.

This chapter concludes the second section of this book by drawing on three particular frameworks – post modernism, social constructionism and sensemaking – in order to introduce our own framework for leadership. The intention is that we sketch out the broad contours of a performative approach, before laying out the specific features and implications of this framework in more detail throughout the remainder of the text. The three frameworks we draw on within this chapter have become increasingly prevalent in some of the more recent leadership theory which is starting to emerge and which Storey (2004b) terms the "post-transformational" school of thought (although we prefer to describe them as "sensemaking" as for us it reflects what they have in common rather than what they are not). This is not, he suggests, a coherent set of

theories of leadership, but we would argue that the frameworks outlined here do share significant similarities; centrally, they highlight the importance of social factors in the conceptualisation and practice of leadership. In so doing, they move beyond essentialist and individualistic conceptions of leadership (and notions of self), to one which is more relational and able to capture the complexity of the social and organisational contexts within which leadership is exercised.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is difficult to define; indeed, one of the characteristics of this diverse set of concepts from a variety of disciplines is a lack of coherence. Broadly speaking, however, postmodernism is a reaction against the modernist project. For example, Derrida (e.g. 1984, 1988) critiqued modernistic thinking on the grounds that it is modelled around linear and rational assumptions (although the slipperiness of the definitions here is illustrated by the number of novelists – such as James Joyce – typically included in the modernist canon who can scarcely be called linear or rationalist). Postmodern thinking views the world as more complex and uncertain, where "reality" is not fixed or determined. Rather than outline the overall territory – and there are already texts (such as Bertens, 1995) that attempt to do this – we shall focus briefly on those aspects most germane to our discussion of leadership. These are: the supposed decline of the grand narrative: the discussion of the link between power and knowledge; the identification of the hyperreal; and the alleged death of the author.

Much of Chapters 2 and 3 were given over to challenging the grand narrative of leadership promoted by the psychological paradigm; that is, leadership theory should be concerned with identifying the essential intra-personal characteristics of individual leaders (which we – and many others – see as a fundamentally modernist enterprise). Stepping back from the literature on leadership, the promulgation of universalist "meta-narratives" has been strongly resisted within the wider post modern movement (e.g. Lyotard, 1984 [1979]). In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, Lyotard (1984) drew on the work of writers such as Wittgenstein in arguing that knowledge and power are two sides of the same coin. In modernist society, he argued, knowledge was used to legitimate social action, with the suggestion that these "truths" would advance humanity. Yet, Lyotard opposed these modern meta-narratives (or grand narratives), arguing that these large-scale theories of the world are inadequate to represent and contain its complexity. If meta-narratives

are rejected, then Lyotard argued, what we have to fall back on are little narratives (or Wittgenstein's "language games"). These little narratives occur in limited settings in which there are clear rules for understanding behaviour. If society no longer values big philosophical narratives (e.g. Marxism), then we are left with smaller and more local contexts within which we have to decide and act. Life, therefore, is fragmented into a series of localised scenarios, where what legitimates knowledge is how well it performs or enables a person to perform in particular roles. Lyotard calls this form of postmodern legitimation "performativity"; it acknowledges that disparate and potentially dissensual theories – in our case of leadership – may help us construct useful accounts without any expectation that they are – or could be – objectively "true."

As we have just suggested, there is a connection between this concern of postmodernism and its interest in the link between power and knowledge. The major difficulty with the way that power is typically conceptualised within mainstream notions of leadership – when it is raised at all – is that it appears in a rather "static" form. One of the difficulties with dominant accounts of leadership is that they assume, usually implicitly, that power resides within individuals and is derived from positional authority (typically in some form of hierarchy). In other words, power appears as a resource possessed by a leader which can be exerted over subordinates in order to get them to do what the leader wants. Conceiving of power as a resource (where one agency or individual can be said to have more power than another) suggests many potential sources of power. In a recent summary, Clegg *et al.* (2005) include: information; expertise; stature and prestige; access to top-level managers; and the control of money, sanctions and rewards. To this list might also be added legal prerogatives (such as formal accountability for use of public money). Pfeffer (1992) argues that it is crucial that leaders study these sources carefully: "since we cannot otherwise hope to gain individual success in organisations or the success of the organisations themselves" (p. 8).

This account of power as a resource is undoubtedly useful in highlighting the many tools a senior manager possesses within a hierarchy to ensure that subordinates follow overall direction or take specific action. It draws attention to two particular issues of interest to us throughout this text: firstly, and looking forward to Chapter 8, it lists a number of the interventions available to leaders which are accompaniments or alternatives to the performance of leadership; and, secondly, looking back to Chapter 2, it suggests why we believe that for leaders in a hierarchy to rely on charisma in their leadership performance to gain commitment is a sign of weakness not strength (of course, and in contrast,

in an enclave setting, the exercise of charisma may be an important component of such performance).

Lukes' (1974) famous analysis suggests that power can be exercised in three ways:

- *Direct decision-making*: "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do" (e.g. through contractual requirements) (Dahl, 1957: 202–203);
- *Non-decision making*: A prevents the issues or questions which are in B's interests, but not in A's, from surfacing (e.g. through excluding items from board meetings) (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962); and
- *Defining interests*: A may exercise power over B "by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants" (e.g. through framing a problem in a particular way) (Lukes, 1974: 23).

The first of the types outlined above is the one which is most familiar to mainstream leadership literature. Conceptualising power as a resource tends to denote an element of coercion – that is, leaders forcing others into action – or at the very least as a one-way relationship where interventions are decided by the leader (e.g. Hershey and Blanchard's model of follower support). Power also appears as a zero sum game in this analysis; either you have power or you do not. This account also fails to take account of the ways in which those without such resources are still able to resist power (see Prince, 1998).

However, more recent accounts of leadership (e.g. the transformational model) have introduced less direct forms of power (e.g. influence) at the same time as the second and third forms of power summarised by Lukes have gained more salience. Whilst the second is a close relative of the first, the third type suggests a more subtle – Marxists might say insidious – form of power. It opens up the idea that power can be seen as a property of relations rather than a resource.

One of the central concerns of postmodernism has been the analysis of the ways in which power is manifested in these relations. Foucault (1977), for example, argued that the 18th century saw the introduction of methods "which made possible the meticulous control of the operation of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed on them a relation of docility-utility [and] might be called 'disciplines'" (p. 181, parentheses added). These "disciplines" – which he also calls regulatory practices – are "a multiplicity of … processes … which overlap, repeat, or imitate one another" (p. 182).

This concept of power also informs the postmodern notion of "performativity". So, for instance, the work of Butler (e.g. 2006 [1990]) explores the ways in which assumptions about, and expectations of, gender are constructed through the discourses of the powerful (and also the ways in which these discourses can be resisted). Following this line of argument, the concept of an essential self as discussed in most leadership texts (and the leader development interventions based thereon, such as those described by Gill, 2006) can be seen – in common with many of the "grand narratives" of modernism – as not merely misguided but rather as an example of the discourse of the most powerful being used to shape the attitudes and aspirations of the less powerful (as well, of course, as a bid for authority and resources by, in this case, psychology as a profession). As Butler (2006) puts the case in relation to notions of gender and selfhood: "[w]hereas the question of what constitutes 'personal identity' … almost always centers on the question of what internal features of the person establishes the continuity or self-identity of the person through time, the question here will be: To what extent do *regulatory practices* of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person … in other words, the 'coherence' and 'continuit'y of 'the person' are not logical or analytical features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility" (p. 23, italics in original).

Hall (1996) makes explicit the processes of exclusion at play in all such constructions:

> *The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure … the "unities" which identities proclaim are, in fact, constructed within the play of power and exclusion…* (pp. 17–18)

Gartsen and Grey (1997) also suggest this analysis in their review of "self-help" leadership texts. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective, they argue that these books, "for all the humanist talk of recognizing the inner self" (p. 222) have as their main purpose" 'to validate a particular version of the self which is congruent with the demands of organizational life" (p. 223). They go on to suggest that in the discourses of "self-help", "to be true to ones self is here part of an active process of self-construction, one in which the person *attempts* to sustain a coherent narrative of self-identity" (p. 228, italics added). The work of Ford (2006), discussed in the last chapter, seems to suggest that the focus here on the attempt, rather than the achievement, is apposite. Taken

together, these arguments would suggest that it is not the essential self that is honed for leadership; rather, it is the attribution of leadership – along with the regulatory practices of leader development – that shape the conception of the self.

Such conceptualisations expose the relational notion of power where it is interwoven with institutional concepts of legitimacy. As suggested above, the notion of a leader with power instructing subordinates only accounts for some of the ways in which power might be enacted. Theorists such as Clegg (1989) argue that we should be more interested in how power is manifest in practice and that our predecessors have focused too much on agency and not enough on two other aspects of power; these being the social and systemic elements that form the context within which individual interactions take place. He argues that the social element consists of the rules of meaning and membership within which power is exercised and the system elements comprise the methods of control and discipline that agencies use to ensure effective production. Largely influenced by theorists such as Foucault, such accounts of power and domination have become more prevalent and pervasive within a range of literatures.

However, in the second edition of *Power: a radical view,* Lukes (2005) sounds a warning in relation to such accounts. Lukes argues that, in his earlier works, Foucault (e.g. 1977) presents a vision of domination which is both "extreme" and "misleading" (p. 88); in suggesting that "power 'constitutes' the 'free' subject" (p. 106) this perspective leaves little room for agency. Moreover, despite the number of scholars who have since embraced the notion of power as repression, Foucault rejected this "extreme" position towards the end of his life. Nonetheless, the discussion of social and systemic forces has obvious links to the institutional theory discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, and acknowledging the critiques of Lukes, these forces do suggest limits to the regulatory practices that can be deployed and the little narratives that can plausibly be told; this account is congruent with our argument for a constrained version of postmodernism.

The idea of power as a relational entity is demonstrated in the transformational leadership model, where notions of power are treated as different from notions of influence. Influence is an enabling process that mobilizes followers to attain goals, whereas power tends to be seen as a repressive property that compels subordinates to attain goals. Thus, within most conceptualisations of transformational leadership, power tends to be conceptualised negatively. Social influence, on the other hand, is viewed as a means through which followers (i.e. subordinates,

but also colleagues and peers) will be prompted to act in a voluntary manner (although as several commentators have noted, e.g. DeCelles & Pfarrer, 2004, transformational leaders are not always altruistic in their intentions and, therefore, social influence is not always experienced as positive). More importantly, Foucault's conceptualisation of power does not necessarily view discipline as overtly coercive but inextricably linked to concepts of social influence (and this line of argument connects us back to the ideas of Clegg, 1989). Within such a reading, neither followers nor subordinates are routinely and overtly coerced by individual leaders. Rather, they are more or less influenced through the social and discursive forces that have shaped their understanding of legitimate authority within the collective identity where leadership is being performed. As a consequence of this analysis, the crisp distinction between transactional leadership – the exercise of power – and transformational leadership – the exercise of influence – is no longer so clear-cut. At the same time, the insight that efficacious leadership is an intervention that encourages the commitment of followers is an important contribution of the transformational trope.

Of course, leaders may try and shape new collective identities. However, these cannot simply be forged from scratch. They must make reference to pre-existing artefacts in seeking to create a revised collective identity. Thus, leaders may draw on familiar routines but attempt to re-interpret or re-present them in a way that (re-)makes sense of the context for followers in line with the vision of the leader. As Grint (2005b) argues, "leadership is essentially hybrid in nature – it comprises humans, clothes, adornments, technologies, cultures, rules and so on" (p. 2); thus, a wide range of symbolic resources are invoked and re-created to act as a form of "semiotic bricolage" (Schwalbe & Mason-Shrock, 1996) which gives substance to this collective identity. Whilst re-emphasising the social setting, this argument also still recognises that leadership has to be embodied; that is, it has to be undertaken by a human agent. Nonetheless, as Schreyogg and Hopfl (2004) observe: "in work organisations, the actor is constrained by context, role and script, with a limited capacity for … improvisation" (p. 695).

In a similar vein, Hosking (1988) and Hosking *et al*. (1995) contrast entative and relational approaches to power in organising. The entative view treats "leader" and "leadership" as synonymous and as though they are the properties of an individual. The "entity" in this case then is the leader and leadership is treated as a function of that leader (in terms either of what the leader does or of his/her underlying characteristics). The relational approach views leadership not as a

personal property but a process with particular social and cognitive dimensions. The entative approach generally treats contextual variables as independent of the activities – including sensemaking – of participants. Hosking maintains that this minimises differences in values and interests between groups within organisations: "values and interests cannot be ignored for the reason that they are implicated in participants" constructions of their pasts, presents and futures, along with understandings of cause-effect relationships, the conditions for acceptance or rejection of influence attempts, and distributions of resources. In sum, values and interests are central to participants' constructions of their social order and the terms on which they will do 'business'" (Hosking, 1988: 154).

Thus, Hosking suggests that power resides in relations, not in individuals. As such, in exercising power, one must appeal to the values and interests of individuals which are formed through individuals' constructions of the world around them. Aspects of this analysis again chime with that of Clegg (e.g. 1989) who conceptualises power as a network of relations in which actors are embedded. Central to Clegg's accounts is that the social world is largely socially constructed, "there is only representation; there is no fixed, real, hidden or excluded term or dimension … [P]ower is the apparent order of taken for-granted categories of existence as they are fixed and represented in a myriad of discursive forms and practices" (1989: 183–184). Thus, "[D]iscourse is central; power is not a thing but a relation of flows; we are all practical ethnomethodologists seeking to enrol, translate, and otherwise socially construct the people, places, things and situations which matter to us – but they are doing it too" (Clegg *et al.*, 2005: 300).

If we hold this notion of power as a relational entity which is socially constructed, of which more in a moment, then a key implication of leadership is that this is an inherently political process: "[L]eadership is a political matter for the reason that different participants may seek to further different, sometimes conflicting, values and interests; further, leadership is political for the reasons that some values and interests are likely to be promoted at the expense of others" (Hosking, 1988: 154). In his accounts of power, Mintzberg (e.g. 1983, 1985) was probably one of the first to characterise organisations as venues for political processes, describing them as "political arenas". Although some work has been done to start to try and understand political behaviours in organisations (e.g. Ferris & Judge, 1991; Pfeffer, 1992; Ammeter *et al.*, 2002), calls for the study of the political nature of leadership in organisations have largely gone unanswered (House & Aditya, 1997).

By drawing attention to the power of discourse, postmodern thinking also suggested the existence of hyperreality. One of the main facets of hyperreality is the ability of discourses (usually transmitted in the mass media) to shape individuals' concepts of "reality" in a way that it is indistinguishable from fantasy. Within technologically advanced postmodern cultures, it is argued, we are unable to distinguish between what is "real" and what is not. In the process where representations of things come to replace the things being represented, the representations become more important that the "real thing" (Baudrillard, 1988a). Baudrillard in particular suggests that the world we live in has been replaced by a copy world, where we seek simulated stimuli and nothing more. Concepts of simulation and simulacra are fundamental to the process of hyperreality, where the process of simulation blends "reality" and representation; i.e. there is no clear indication of where the former stops and the latter begins. The simulacrum is a copy with no original, what Deleuze (1990: 257) describes as "an image without resemblance". Signs refer only to other signs, not to the signified; but hyperreality is not just about an inverted relation of sign and signified, it is also referring to receding reference, where each iteration is another link in the signifying chain (and we return to the importance of this point in Chapter 6). Ultimately, the argument runs, what is commodified is not simply an image – which may have acquired a central role in contemporary culture – but lived experience itself (Jameson, 1991).

This abstract idea is well illustrated by the "image" of the "Pirates of the Caribbean" (Eco, 1986). The cultural creation of pirates over the past three hundred years – based to some extent on the life of Henry Morgan (who was actually a privateer which is somewhat different from a pirate, at least in terms of legitimacy if not in terms of loot seeking) – is latterly commodified in the creation of a ride in a Disney theme park. So successful is this ride that a film franchise is developed for which a number of replica ships are built. Subsequently, these ships are moored in various Caribbean locations and opened to the public as examples of pirate vessels.

Theorists such as Baudrillard point to contemporary trends within the media as a way of demonstrating hyperreality. Audiences have become tired of watching on television and film reproductions of the lives of others and have started to crave access to apparently real human experience. Hence, Denzin states, "the preoccupation with the live event, the on-site news broadcast, the immediate interpretation of an event after it has occurred, the replaying of newsworthy events, the simultaneous broadcasting of an event and its reproduction on screen

that audience members watch, in case they missed what they just witnessed" (1991: 51). There has also been the recent boom in the popularity of so-called "reality" television programmes and "documentary" films. These claim to provide insights into the "real life experience" of individuals but what we view here is not the real but the mediated which Baudrillard (1988b) terms the "ecstasy of communication" which defines postmodern life and culture. Thus, postmodern concepts such as hyperreality draw attention to the idea that social performance can be viewed ultimately as a copy of previous performances which instantaneously reproduce themselves by being viewed and therefore disseminated to others (who may then potentially incorporate the received performative action into their own). Schechner (2003) argues that the "very premise" of reality TV is "to erase the distinctions between the real and the staged" (p. 126) in ways that highlight the performances that underpin all of our social relations. Further links may be made here to the work of Judith Butler when she asserts: "[t]he power of discourse to produce what it names is linked with the question of performativity. The performative is thus one domain in which power acts as discourse" (1993b: 17).

This period of postmodern thinking – with its concern with discourse and text that challenged a foundationalist notion of language, representation and subject – also gave rise to another influential idea. This has probably been made most famous through Roland Barthes when he talked about the "death of the author" (Barthes, 1967). In this seminal article, Bathes criticises the figure of the "Author" as being located within the modern discourse of individualism, which affords autonomy and interiority to the individual person; this tradition of literary criticism considers aspects of an author's identity (e.g. historical context, religion, political views etc.) in establishing an accepted meaning for a literary work. In contrast, Barthes suggests that a critical refusal of the ideology of the author is necessary so that we may open up the text to a multiplicity of interpretations. Text becomes reconfigured as a multi-dimensional space where a variety of accounts, none of them original, blend and clash. Reading, therefore, is a process of disentanglement where meaning is no longer controlled – or even limited – by the author.

This critique marks a shift from a model of authorship as biographical intentionality to one where the author is never more than the instance of writing. The meaning of a work now depends on the impressions of the reader rather than the "passions" or "tastes" or the writer; that is, the unity of the text's meaning ultimately lies with the audience rather than with the initial creator. This idea is a key influence on

the notions of narrative and audience that we discuss in Chapters 7 and 8.

Although we would characterise ourselves as rather tentative postmodernists – for example, because we would argue that the range of plausible interpretations available to an audience are constrained by the institutional context in which they are generated – these ideas are the intellectual compost where much of what follows has its roots. However, another, albeit related, strand of social theory has influenced many contemporary writers on leadership: social constructionism.

Social constructionism

We suggested above that postmodernism is generally considered to be a reaction against the modernist project. Social constructionism may be viewed similarly, although as a response to a particular aspect of the modernist project. Social constructionism is essentially a theory of knowledge, where the central concern is how social phenomena develop in particular contexts. Social constructionists are normally opposed to essentialism and are concerned with uncovering the ways that individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social realities. As Klugman (1997) suggests, "reality does not exist in any ultimate empirical way, but it is rather a construction of the person who is viewing or experiencing reality at any given moment" (p. 304).

Like postmodernism, social constructionist inquiry has developed from a range of disciplinary fields and thus has a number of variants. Ford *et al*. (2008) usefully identify two broad approaches: a sense-making approach which focuses on the narratives that shape how we make sense of our selves and our lives as we shift from one field of interaction to another (e.g. Gergen, 1991); and a poetic approach (e.g. Shotter, 2008) which represents a more complex situation where "language and the world are intertwined in a dialogical or chiasmic relation with each other, in which we are shaped just as much, if not more, by the world, as the world by us" (Shotter, 2008: 501). Whilst we build in much of what follows on the former, we do not want to overlook, given our stress on institutional theory, the important emphasis of the latter.

Broadly, social constructionism asserts that our knowledge of the world is partial and specific to the historic and cultural circumstances in which it is created or shared (Burr, 1995). This knowledge is co-constructed through interactions between people (the social element) and, because knowledge (and the consequent social action) changes

over time, this produces numerous possible social constructions. The theory suggests that the meanings that we attribute to our experience are thus:

- *multiple* (because each of us has our own);
- *negotiated* (because we seek to find common ground with others);
- *contested* (because finding such common ground can be difficult); and
- *transient* (because we are frequently discovering new meanings in these conversations and discarding old ones).

Social constructionism, therefore, argues that our human interactions have the power to shape the attitudes and behaviours of other members of organisations. As a consequence, social constructionists seek to analyse the ongoing relational acts between people. In terms of organisational theory, the particular term that has come to represent this phenomenon is sensemaking (e.g. Weick, 1995) and we discuss this shortly.

There is one other important implication of social constructionism to highlight here in terms of the performative framework offered in this book. Goffman (e.g. 1959, 1974) drew attention to the importance of "framing". This proposes that social experience is governed by "frame"; that is, the principle of organisation which defines the meaning and significance of social events. The process of framing involves bracketing an activity and providing some form of cue about what that bracketed activity means. In terms of leadership, this means that the way in which problems are framed within a context will restrict the range of leadership responses considered plausible. The key point here is that events and actions do not speak for themselves; they depend on framing for their meaning. However, Goffman did not believe that individuals simply have agency to frame experience as they wish. Framing is constrained by social structures and social organisation, but frames may further strengthen existing frames or loosen them (as demonstrated in Butler's analysis of gender and as suggested in Shotter's version of social constructionism).

It is also worth introducing another consequence of social constructionism; it has implications for the role of the researcher investigating leadership as s/he moves from being a passive observer exploring "facts" and "truths" to a role of "constructing the very reality s/he is attempting to investigate" (Chia, 1996: 42). The involvement of researchers in the research relationship actively constructs the notion of leadership and leaders and the narratives that are created within which research subjects are placed (Ford & Lawler, 2007). Furthermore, and as we have observed

earlier, these researchers' accounts of narratives – and, indeed, the "very reality" they construct – typically do not pay sufficient attention to the local context of their creation and which significantly constrain the plausible options available to them.

The consideration of context also feeds back into the ways in which power is conceptualised in accounts of leadership. As suggested above, it has often been noted that mainstream accounts of leadership presume, where they discuss it all, a rather hierarchical notion of power. However, this is indicative of the specific context within which much leadership theories are formed, where hierarchies tend to dominate our conceptions of organisations (see Ford & Lawler, 2007). Of course, this is not necessarily a reflection of either all contexts or the way in which organisational structures actually operate in practice. In recent years we have seen interest in concepts of "distributed leadership" being developed. These include ideas around "informal leaders" (Hosking, 1988), "decentred leadership" (Martin, 1992) and "shared leadership" (Judge & Ryman, 2001). Whilst they acknowledge the potential for alternative ways of organising to that represented by the hierarchy, these accounts are not always entirely clear about what is being distributed by whom and to whom – or whether it is being actively distributed or merely taken – and if they are restricted to specific institutional settings.

Sensemaking

Fullan (2001) identifies five independent but mutually reinforcing components of effective leadership:

- moral purpose;
- understanding the change process;
- relationship building;
- knowledge creation and sharing; and
- coherence making.

The focus on this last element – leaders as sense-makers – is central to recent papers on leadership by Grint (e.g. 2005a) – where the purpose of leaders asking questions is to enable consensual construction of the nature of the problem – and Pye (2005).

Although within this text we will mostly concentrate on sensemaking as applied to the context of organisations, the concept was originally developed in the field of communication research and practice by Brenda Dervin at Ohio State University in the early 1970s as a

methodology for researching communicating behaviours, attitudes and beliefs (for an overview of these early formulations see Dervin *et al.*, 2003). Sensemaking in this original conceptualisation (generally known as the Sense-Making Methodology or SMM) was an attempt to be explicit in the ways in which metatheoretic assumptions and methods were bridged in studies of communication. SMM views "reality" as something that individuals have the capacity to know, but that this varies for individuals through time and space. Thus, the central idea of SMM is "how people make sense of their worlds" (Dervin, 2003: 223), with the ultimate intention that a listener might be able to see how a person views a situation. As such, alternative approaches to research need to be employed where individuals are not considered rational, fixed and unchanging, but rather as actors who make and unmake sense as they move through time and space and respond, test and adapt to modes of communication. Approaches which accommodate movement and fluidity via a dialogic approach – it is suggested – better enable researchers to understand the interpretations of people who themselves are capable of interpreting their own situations (and we return to consider similar ideas which are rippled through audience studies in Chapter 8).

A number of the initial applications of this technique were by librarians attempting to understand the unique situations of their users and what they were searching for on their own terms rather than on those of the typical library system (e.g. Dervin & Fraser, 1985; Dervin & Dewdney, 1986). However, this concept has been extended and applied to a wide range of different contexts. Importantly for this text, a rich vein of work has emerged in terms of organisations strongly influenced by the work of Karl Weick. Fullan (2001) draws on the seminal work of Weick (e.g. 1995) who provides an accessible introduction to the notion of sensemaking: "[A]ctive agents construct …events. They 'structure the unknown'… How they construct what they construct, why, and with what effects are the central questions for people interested in sensemaking" (p. 4). As Weick puts it, "sensemaking is about authoring as well reading" (p. 7); for him, it involves creation as much as discovery. Box 4.1 outlines the seven properties of sensemaking as suggested by Weick. The importance of Weick's work here is that it emphasises the potential for changing the way in which organisational pasts, presents and futures are constructed by organisational members and, in particular, by the interventions of organisational leaders. By framing issues in a particular way, sensemaking may be used by leaders in order to engage members of the group in their proposed activities.

Box 4.1 Weick's seven properties of sensemaking

1. It is grounded in the importance of sensemaking in the construction of the identity of the self (and of the organisation); "who I am as indicated by discovery of how and what I think"
2. It is retrospective in its focus on sensemaking as rendering meaningful lived experience; "to learn what I think, I look back over what I said earlier"
3. It recognises that people produce at least part of the environment (e.g. the constraints and opportunities) within which they are sensemaking; "I create the object to be seen and inspected when I say or do something"
4. It stresses that sensemaking is a social process undertaken with others; "what I say and single out and conclude are determined by who socialized me and how I was socialized, as well as by the audience I anticipate will audit the conclusions I reach"
5. It argues that sensemaking is always ongoing in that it never starts and it never stops (even though events may be chopped out of this flow in order to be presented to others); "my talking is spread across time, competes for attention with other ongoing projects, and is reflected on after it is finished, which means my interests may already have changed"
6. It acknowledges that sensemaking is typically based on cues, where one simple and familiar item can initiate a process that encompasses a much broader range of meanings and implications; "the 'what' that I single out and embellish as the content of the thought is only a small proportion of the utterance that becomes salient because of context and personal dispositions"
7. It is driven by plausibility rather than accuracy; "I need to know enough about what I think to get on with my projects but no more, which means that sufficiency and plausibility take precedence over accuracy"

(Derived from Weick, 1995, pp. 61–62, in Hardacre & Peck, 2005)

Having outlined the main features of the concept of sensemaking, we now move on to consider how sensemaking has been conceptualised within leadership theories before moving on to set out our performative framework of leadership.

Sensemaking theories of leadership

So far in this chapter we have highlighted the influence that intellectual movements such as postmodernism and theories of knowledge such as social constructionism have had in terms of conceptualising the nature of the world. The postmodernist reaction to the modernist project (and its meta-narratives) has highlighted the ways in which knowledge and power (both key concepts in terms of leadership) are not considered as normative factors but instead are shaped by the dominant social forces and discourses within a society or group. If we hold this to be a plausible account, then there is still a role for agency in the form of social action which may reproduce or resist social structures and social institutions. Thus, the role of sensemaking becomes central in actively constructing understandings of concepts and events within any given context. This section provides an overview of some of the ways in which sensemaking has been conceptualised within theories of leadership.

The seminal paper by Smircich and Morgan (1982) argues that the very act of leadership becomes "real" in the process of framing and defining reality for followers; a key role for leaders is in managing meaning. Smircich and Morgan are amongst those researchers who argue that leaders are the primary symbolising agents within an organisation or group (see also Bennis, 1994), although others suggest that leaders and followers are co-authors (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989; Fairhurst, 1993; Shotter, 1999). It is argued that the management of meaning requires the manipulation of "possible figure-ground relations between foci and context" (Shotter, 1999: 246). According to this thesis, leaders select foci and guide followers towards the most viable path against a particular backdrop.

More recently, Pye (2005) has talked extensively about the importance of sensemaking. Her argument is that the issue of leadership should be reframed, actually shifting the subject away from leadership and towards "a more informed appreciation of the daily *doing* of leading, grounded in organising, just as it is in everyday life" (Pye, 2005: 33). Pye goes on to argue that the notion of sensemaking is useful as it is able to incorporate all aspects of social activity which go into the process of leadership. This argument draws on the work of Weick (1993: 119) who explains, "[A]ny attempt to pinpoint *the* leader or to explain survival by looking at a single set of actions is doomed to failure because it does not reflect how needs change as a crisis unfolds nor does it reflect how different coherent groupings form to meet the new needs".

Thus, sensemaking is important as, "it is more inclusive and draws in other crucial elements of everyday life in organisations which are overlooked by much of the leadership literature" (Pye, 2005: 37). Leadership has a dual role in sensemaking in that it should both help shape specific issues and also act as a key referent point for others; "[L]eadership lies in large part in generating a point of reference, against which a feeling of organizing and direction can emerge" (Pye, 2005: 258). By understanding leadership as a sensemaking process in this way, Pye argues that we may more clearly understand what is going on within the processes of organising (albeit that the single empirical case study in this paper, whilst interesting, is scarcely compelling).

Grint's recent accounts of leadership (e.g. 2005a) have also focused on the role of the leader in shaping the meaning that is given to situations by others; that is, he sees a significant part of leadership as consisting of influencing the sensemaking of others. Grint argues against leadership approaches which suggest that context or situation may be rendered transparent through scientific analysis: "this is a naïve assumption because it underestimates the extent to which the context or situation is actively constructed by the leader, leaders, and/or decision-makers. In effect, leadership involves the social construction of the context that both legitimates a particular form of action and constitutes the world in process. If that rendering of the context is successful – for there are usually contending and competing renditions – the newly constituted context then limits the alternatives available such that those involved begin to act differently" (Grint, 2005a: 1470–1471). Grint is suggesting that leadership has a proactive role in constructing context. However, Grint is keen to note that this process of construction is not about individual leaders as independent agents with the ability to manipulate the world; this is not a return to "great men" theories. Grint is drawing attention to the notion that context does not exist independently of human agency (and we return to a critique of Grint's discussion of context and its creation in Chapter 11).

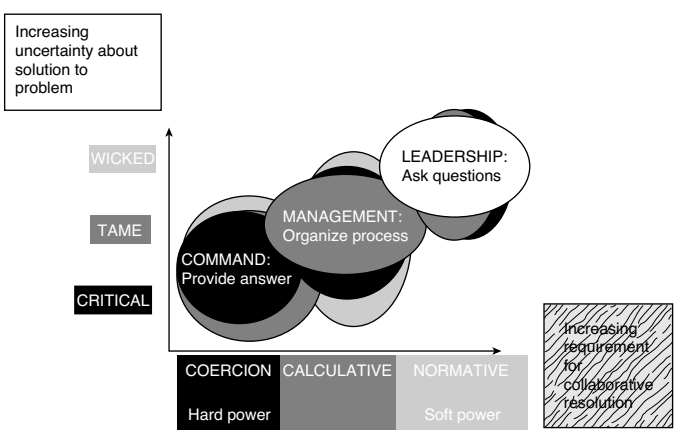
In thinking about how leadership might influence context, Grint (2005a) considers the nature of the problem which is to be tackled and the various forms of power available within organisations to think about how leaders might act within various situations. In this analysis, Grint is also returning to the old debate over the difference between leadership and management. He argues that the distinction between management and leadership is best understood through an analysis of the problem to be solved (wicked, tame or critical) and the nature of the

power to be exercised (hard power or soft power). Grint characterises problems according to three different types:

- *Critical problems* require an immediate intervention with hard power and therefore demand a command response (where the priority is to provide an answer);
- *Tame problems* are ones that organisations have seen before and thus have an established reaction and require a managerial response (where the priority is to organise a process);
- *Wicked problems* are pernicious social problems where the solution is unclear and require a leadership response that deploys soft power (where the priority is to ask questions).

He goes on to map these illustratively (Figure 4.1) to demonstrate how leaders play a role in not just trying to use authority in a traditional sense, but also to frame problems so that they may gain the legitimacy or authority to act in a particular way. What counts as legitimate authority within a situation depends on rendering a context persuasively and then displaying the appropriate authority style; "[I]n other

Figure 4.1 A typology of problems, power and authority



(from Grint, 2005a: 1477)

words, success is rooted in persuading followers that the problematic situation is either of a Critical, Tame or Wicked nature and that therefore the appropriate authority form is Command, Management or Leadership in which the role of the decision-maker is to provide the answer, or organize the process or ask the question, respectively" (Grint, 2005a: 1477).

These sensemaking theories of leadership are important contributions to the debate. In particular, they stress the relational aspects which have been overlooked in much of the last hundred years. However, they neither tell us much about the practical ways in which leaders may shape the sensemaking of others nor shed much light of the nature of the contexts within which such sensemaking take place. It is these two aspects of leadership that our own account seeks to develop under the rubric of performing leadership.

Performing leadership

As we have made clear throughout this book, we are not claiming to be the first authors to explore the idea that leadership is performed, with Aristotle (1991, passim) being amongst the earliest writers to make a connection. More recently, Grint himself (2000) suggests that "[L]eadership is the world of the performing arts, the theatre of rhetorical skill, of negotiating skills, and of inducing the audience to believe in the world you paint with words and props" (p. 28). At most, we are suggesting that we have perhaps focused more than previous writers on: a) producing a theoretical framework for the link between leadership and performance; and b) exploring the implications for leadership and its development of this framework. For instance, as indicated above, Grint has returned to this theme without giving it the rigorous analysis that runs through so much of his work (e.g. 2005a&b). Other authors have looked at specific aspects of leadership performance (e.g. Denning, 2005, has examined narrative) or explored the implications of theatrical practice based around Shakespearean texts – indeed there are a number of texts that have drawn in the Bard (e.g. Corrigan, 1999).

Our theory has two foundations, both derived from the literature on the performing arts. The first is the exploration of the implications of accounts of performance taken from within the contemporary literature on performance studies, in particular Schechner (2003), for the study of leadership, drawing a distinction between leadership practice within organisations that "is" a performance and leadership practice that can be studied "as" a performance. While the former specifically

relate to actions associated with organisational *rituals*, the latter may be applied to a much broader range of everyday interactions (picking up on the suggestion of Pye, 2005). The second looks at performance as a combination of enactment, narrative and audience – or E-N-A – framework (this was inspired by Kate McLuskie based on works such as Jameson, 1981; Worthen, 1987; Phelan & Lane, 1998). The dynamic interaction between these three elements shapes the nature of the performance whether it occurs within formal rituals or informal interactions.

The origins of performance as an academic discipline lie in accounts of ritual within anthropology; specifically, the rites and ceremonies that enact social relationships (Bell, 1997). One of the key ideas in this literature is that of restored behaviour, defined as the "physical, verbal or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first-time; that are prepared or rehearsed" (Schechner, 2003: 29). Broadly speaking, in this tradition the emphasis is on deliberate performance; that is, on occasions where the event literally entails a performance (for example, religious ceremonies), in which the criterion for assessing cultural performances is their efficacy. On this account, the formal occasions of organisational life, such as the board meeting, can be viewed as constituting a performance (and many observational accounts of boards make this point Winkler, 1974, 1975; Peck *et al.*, 2004a).

At the same time, leadership in organisations can be viewed "as" a performance, drawing attention to the insights that can be generated from this metaphorical perspective. Whilst it is possible to view all behaviour within organisations, including formal occasions, through a metaphorical lens (as, for example, in the earlier work of Mangham, e.g. 1986), Schechner (2003) argues that this approach is most appropriately applied to the more informal elements, to the "[M]any events and behaviours [that] are one time events. Their 'onceness' is a function of context, reception, and the countless ways bits of behavior can be organized, performed, and displayed" (p. 29, parentheses added). In performance studies, this once-performed behaviour is exemplified by the improvised performances that can take place in a wide variety of settings. Interestingly, in his later work, Mangham's exploration of the metaphorical resonances of viewing organisational performance as theatre draws on some organisational examples that take place in more informal settings (e.g. Mangham, 1996).

Another way of thinking about this "is"/"as" distinction might be to view them as transitive and intransitive performances of leadership. Performances might be considered transitive when they are directed towards a specific end, in order to elicit a particular response from

others. For example, transitive leadership might involve leaders actively performing authority, such as in the act of decision-approving at a board meeting. In contrast, intransitive leadership could be considered to lie in the myriad of interactions and relationships that take place across organisational settings. There are clearly links here to other aspects of organisational theory, such as Hosking's (1995) conception of entitative and relational approaches to power in organising which we discussed above, and which in turn can be linked to the contrasting accounts of power in the work of Mintzberg (1983) and Clegg (1989) (also reviewed above). This aspect of our theory will be explored in more depth in the subsequent chapters on enactment (Section 3, Chapters 5 and 6).

It is crucial at this point to note that we are not talking about leadership as being literally a theatrical performance. Earlier we introduced the work of Goffman for his insights into the role which "framing" plays within the processes of organising. Goffman (1959) also famously used the metaphor of "theatre" in relation to organisations, suggesting that in analysing organisations there are four important dramaturgical dimensions to pay attention to: scripting; settings; staging; and performance. What Goffman is stressing is that performances are always embedded in social systems and are situated in time and space. Moreover, a performance is something that can be seen, it is not a value or a belief. As Manning (2008) notes, although Goffman's work is dramaturgical the use of the theatrical metaphor is just that, a useful analogy: "[H]e does not see life as wholly theatrical, but rather he argues that aspects of it can be so seen. As he has continually asserted a metaphoric way of talking about something is not a literal rendition of social life" (p. 680), albeit that he did argue that a set of specific conditions are necessary for dramaturgy to occur in social life.

To reiterate, our performative framework does not suggest that leadership is literally a theatrical performance. We deploy the idea of performance to emphasise that leadership is a social action. Suggesting leadership to be literally a theatrical performance would be suggesting that leadership is essentially little more than acting (that is, overtly pretending to be someone else). Clearly this could be met with charges that such leadership lacks authenticity or moral value (see Chapter 10 for more discussion of this point). Considering leadership in a performative sense involves possessing a comprehension of the institutional values and norms which are endorsed within that setting and responding in a way that is considered legible and legitimate by a variety of stakeholders.

We suggest that one way in which to think about and capture this complexity is by using the E-N-A framework. Such a framework

considers enactment, narrative and audience as a way of summing up the factors that a leader may consider when designing his or her performance. In the process of making a leadership intervention – or in analysing leadership activities – these three aspects are the fundamental concepts which we would argue are important. Enactment pays attention to what leaders actually do; that is, how they communicate and interact with others and build the legibility and legitimacy to act (whether this is in relation to particular rituals or everyday performances within the limits of social norms). Narrative refers to the kinds of myths, stories and anecdotes which leaders tell, and the links with leaders undertaking the processes of sensemaking. Audience draws attention to the attributions of leadership that those witnessing the performance may make and on what basis. This E-N-A framework therefore, provides the template for Section 3, to which we now move.

Section 3

Enactment, Narrative and Audience

Introduction

Having set out a critique of extant leadership literatures in the previous section, and also briefly introduced the framework of performative leadership, this section sets out our own position in more detail. We consider both the theory and practice of the elements of this framework (enactment, in both its "is" and "as" forms, narrative and audience), the ways in which they start to suggest a new formulation of some of the key themes that leadership studies may need to address and provide some thoughts as the answers those questions may prompt.

Picking up on the discussion in the first chapter of this book, it is perhaps worth giving a short summary of the central concern that emerges from our consideration of the details of this framework. To simplify the issue considerably, the major query that our view of leadership raises could be phrased as: "if leadership in organisations is the answer, what is the question?" Our shorthand answer to this question is that leadership is constituted of interventions that generate enhanced commitment to decisions on behalf of subordinates and peers within and beyond organisations which, when undertaken successfully, have a number of distinct characteristics (and we begin to explore these below). They require leaders to shape the sensemaking of these subordinates and peers in pursuit of this commitment, frequently by framing the nature and purpose of innovations in policies, procedures, technology etc. such that the responses of others are rendered more receptive or positive to these innovations. The nature of successful interventions may vary between organisational contexts in both a limited and a predictable manner. These interventions involve actions on behalf of leaders that

deploy symbolism and provoke emotion as much, if not more, as they rely on instrumental and rational devices. Of course, these instrumental and rational devices – such as the exercise of the power inherent in hierarchical authority or network dominance – may also produce or support the production of commitment to decisions.

5

Rowan Williams not Rowan Atkinson: Rituals and Performative Leadership

Introduction

In Chapter 4, we introduced two key frameworks that underpin our idea of performing leadership. One of these – enactment, narrative and audience – provides the overall structure for this section. The second – the notion that leadership is literally a performance ("is") or that leadership is metaphorically a performance ("as") – is the stepping off point for this and the next chapter. This framework draws on Schechner's (2003) distinction between "is" performances and "as" performances. While the former specifically relates to actions associated with formal rituals, the latter may be applied to a much broader range of everyday interactions.

First of all, however, we need to return to Goffman. He has already featured in Section 2, fundamentally influencing ideas both of self and of framing. In this chapter, we draw extensively on the work that he has prompted on human interaction, in particular his observations on front/back and demeanour/working consensus. At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge the contribution of his contemporary Sacks and his thoughts on turn-taking and sequential organisation; for Sacks, and for Garfinkel, "the centrality of *sequence* – easily dismissed as trivial – *is* shown to be *the* foundation for the social construction of intelligibility" (Samra-Fredericks & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2008: 657, italics in original). What all three have in common is their interest in the micro-analysis of the exchanges that constitute our social world in the context that "society *is* constrained interaction" (Manning, 2008: 681, italics in original). In contrast to Durkheim – who could be argued to work from the top down – Goffman and his contemporaries build from the micro to the macro.

To deal with the back/front distinction first, Goffman (1959) is keen to highlight the teamwork that goes into impression management of both individuals and organisations. This collaborative activity is underpinned by bonds of mutual dependence or obligation on behalf of the actors who seek to establish a favourable appearance; they do this by manipulating the elements of scripting, setting, staging and performing that we turn to in more detail shortly. In our view, it is a plausible reading of Goffman to argue that these "backstage" activities of leaders are moments when they are engaged in performance just as much as when they are "frontstage". Indeed, these are some of the most important settings for leaderly work, albeit that a quite different kind of performance is being carried out. For our purposes, however, we will differentiate the literal "frontstage" performances ("is") from the metaphorical "backstage" performances ("as").

Moving onto demeanour/working consensus, Goffman (1959) argues that in human interaction actors seek order where "face" can be created and maintained; "when that is violated, the interaction potentially collapses and/or intricate forms of 'repair' must be undertaken" (Samra-Fredericks & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2008: 658, quotation marks in original). Respect for this order thus raises the chances that the performance will be successful and that the self will be positively constituted and/or reaffirmed; disrespect for this order makes the selves of the actors involved vulnerable. Manning (2008) argues that Goffman "is not presuming order. There is an abiding sense in which chaos and disorder always lurk at the edges of interactions and these require work to manage … there is a dark shadow … of interruption, loss of poise, alienation and betrayal" (p. 686). Goffman is interested in the detail of these everyday interactions in a way that we do not have space to consider here (although other writers – e.g. Wood & Ladkin, 2006 – are starting to explore these). For us, this concern with order in interaction is important to both of our conceptions of leadership performance (that is, both "is" and "as").

In Chapter 4 we also introduced the link between transitive leadership and "is" performance and intransitive leadership and "as" performance. Transitive here means formal leadership performance as the *enactment* of certain things in order to represent a commitment on behalf of self and others. For example, leaders often perform, in very literal dramaturgical ways, finality in decision making; we shall provide some examples shortly. By intransitive leadership, we mean the situation where the leader performs informally in the everyday warp and weft of organisational life; this might run through the most casual of brief conversations to the dashing off of an e-mail. Whilst these

informal interactions may serve to shape the sensemaking of colleagues, peers and subordinates, they do not typically secure a commitment on behalf of others. This intransitive mode (leadership "as" performance) is considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

Leadership "is" performance

This literal account of performing leadership suggests that efficacious performance relies to some extent upon the shared understandings of performer, co-participants and audience about the rules and purposes of the performance being given. Drawing on the insights of Burke (1962), amongst others (including Goffman, 1959), Hajer (2005) proposes that a four-stage approach to dramaturgy can be broadly discerned:

- *Scripting* – the selection (or not) of the actors and the provision of clues for appropriate action;
- *Settings* – the physical environment in which the interactions between these actors take place including the props that are available in those settings (e.g. minutes, papers, presentations);
- *Staging* – the deliberate attempts to manipulate these interactions (e.g. active players and passive audiences); and
- *Performance* – the manner in which the interaction takes place in the moment and produces or confirms social realities (e.g. understanding of and approach to a problem or perceptions of power relations).

In a later paper (Hajer & Uitermark, 2008), he further suggests another stage:

- *Counter-scripting*: efforts of antagonists to undo the effects of scripts of protagonists (p. 7).

Overall, as Brown (2005) notes: "dramaturgy views social life as a collection of strategies driven by rules and roles" (p. 81). Leaders – and colleagues, peers, followers and subordinates – become familiar with these rules and roles such that they, Hajer and Uitermark (2008) suggest, occupy a "performative habitus"; this notion, they argue, "highlights the dispositions that have been shaped over many years of symbolic labour and that allow … a level of agency and tactical intelligence in particular settings" (pp. 7–8). This phrasing is careful. It seeks to acknowledge, as we did in Chapter 2, that leaders' options are neither determined by either personality or context but nor are they limitless;

indeed, they are significantly constrained – both in terms of action and impact – by the institutional setting in which they are enacted.

Contained within this account is an assumption that any ritual is a staged event – both distinct from everyday life and repeated – with established symbols and stimuli conducted within defined temporal boundaries, with a pre-determined beginning and end, and also with a set of actions and social purposes that are familiar to the participants. In organisational terms, the performance of leadership is the adoption of a role within that ritual; it is the performance of Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury rather than Rowan Atkinson as Mr Bean (that is, to repeat the point made in Chapter 4, it is *not* acting). Goodsell (1989) identifies three forms of rituals in public administration: *explicit rituals* e.g. award dinners, weekly staff meetings; *formalistic processes* e.g. annual budget process; and *expressive programmes* e.g. drug abuse prevention programmes. We want to focus on the first two (as we are not sure that the third category really fulfils the criteria) and also draw out the notion of "efficacy", that is whether "collective rituals actually do succeed in reinforcing acceptance of the enacted doctrines and beliefs" (p. 165).

Prior to the formulation of Hajer's framework, a dramaturgical approach had already permeated out from the sociological literature and formed into a significant body of work exploring the formal meetings of organisations as rituals in: anthropology (e.g. Murphy, 1990; Francis, 1998); industrial sociology (e.g. Strauss & Sayles, 1953); historical sociology (e.g. Van Vree, 1999); political science (e.g. Medvetz, 2006); public administration (Peck *et al.*, 2004a; Peck & 6, 2006); social movements (e.g. Benford & Hunt, 1992); and organisational studies (e.g. Schwartzman, 1989; Fernandez-Revuelta Perez & Robson, 1999). Nonetheless, the adoption of this framework foregrounds the fact that organisational leaders engage in dramaturgical practices – that is, in restored behaviour – day in and day out. If leadership "is" a performance, it is within organisational rituals – from collective board meetings to individual performance appraisals – that such transitive leadership is performed. Yet, despite the increasing interest in performing leadership, there is surprisingly little theorising – and little empirical research beyond the largely anecdotal work of Mangham discussed in Chapter 3 (e.g. 1986, 1997) – on leadership as restored behaviour. This is especially important as this perspective may offer new insights into the ways in which leaders achieve commitment and change (or not) in organisations. Ritual performances have the potential to challenge or to reify the rules and roles of organisations; furthermore, rituals themselves can evolve (or, indeed, be invented, as in the case of the corporate away-day).

We will deal briefly here with an example which draws out some of the implications of this perspective; in so doing we are again highlighting the importance of the back/front distinction introduced by Goffman as well as the importance of the symbolic in organisational life. It is located in the area of formal (and more or less public) meetings in the field of public policy and public management. Broadly, the literature of which it forms a part offers two conclusions:

- that the purpose of such meetings is *social, symbolic* and *implicit* – they are held to sustain culture, organise shared emotions, sustain loyalty, and conciliate over social relations (Schwartzman, 1989; Huff, 1988; Weick, 1995; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) – as much as, if not more than, being *instrumental, palpable and explicit* (that is, existing to make decisions, engage in deliberation, conciliate over content (Simon, 1997)); and
- that the function of such meetings – whilst often presented as being about engaging multiple stakeholders in policy-making or decision-taking – is to gain consent to and legitimacy for decisions already formulated elsewhere (backstage) by the governing elite (e.g. Futrell, 1999; Hajer, 2005).

Following Hajer, Freeman and Peck (2007) present an analysis of a public sector partnership board in the UK which deploys the dramaturgical framework in reporting on members' accounts of private rehearsal followed by public enactment; this is entirely consistent with Schechner's (2003) description of twice-performed, or restored, behaviour. This dramaturgical analysis: identifies the rituals and routines incorporated into the partnership board; points to the importance of backstage behaviour; and highlights the ways in which institutional entrepreneurs were able to mobilise support for reform across multiple interest groups.

This last point is of particular interest, not least because it provides evidence that organisational rituals can evolve. Freeman and Peck (2007) portray the performative nature of partnership governance, indicating that active challenges to proposals became possible when normative rules of appropriateness concerning strategy presentation were perceived by members to have been broken. These transgressions, they suggest, also made discussion of procedural reform – of changes to the ritual – plausible (and here they are echoing one of the findings of Peck *et al.*, 2004a, in their study of a similar governance arrangement). In both cases, albeit to very different extents, the observed ritual was non-efficacious; that is,

the ritual was demonstrating lack of acceptance amongst some members of the doctrines and beliefs being enacted such that it required revision. Without acceptance of these doctrines and beliefs, there was unlikely to be commitment to the decisions taken.

This potential for innovation in the dramaturgy of organisational ritual – in the case of Freeman and Peck (2007) in the scripting – emphasises the perspective of the later Goffman (of "Frame Analysis" 1974 and; "Forms of Talk" 1981) rather than the early Goffman (of "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" 1959) which allows for such creativity. It is one more contribution to the resolution of the ongoing argument between advocates of structure and advocates of agency which is reflected throughout this book. However, we want to also suggest that merely being present in a ritualistic, twice-performed setting – be it backstage or frontstage – is not always a sufficient condition for a leader to possess or exert authority. In these circumstances, the authority of leadership has to be enacted. This point will be illustrated by two examples (the first of which we owe to Perri 6).

Formal meetings and leader authority – the *Challenger* example

One of the most discussed organisational meetings in the literature on organisations is the caucus at Morton Thiokol on the night before the catastrophic launch of the *Challenger* space shuttle in 1986. Thiokol's engineers – who had played a significant role in the design of the shuttle – had been previously making the case in a teleconference with officials at the Marshall and Kennedy space centres that the temperature at Kennedy would be too low the following day for flying to be safe, given what was known about the "O" rings' (two rubber rings that formed a seal between two sections of the Solid Rocket Boosters) capabilities in the cold. Unfortunately, their case, based on limited data and the prevailing patterns of inference from those data in the engineering community created between NASA and its contractors, was not especially strong. Realising that they were losing the argument for a delay in the launch, it was agreed that the teleconference would be suspended to allow Thiokol's managers and engineers time to debate the issue before coming back to the discussion. The officials at Marshall and Kennedy expected Thiokol to come back with new data or revised calculations. As it turned out, the Thiokol engineers had nothing more to offer. Consequently, they found themselves losing the argument – that imminent launch would be too risky – with their own senior

managers within Thiokol. Here is one of Diane Vaughan's several accounts of the fateful final moments of that caucus (1996: 317–319):

> *None of the engineers responded to Mason's [Jerald Mason, senior vice-president, Wasatch Operations] request for new information. Mason, Wiggins [Calvin Wiggins, vice-president and general manager, space division], Kilminster [Joe Kilminster, vice-president, space booster programmes] and Lund [Robert K Lund, vice-president, engineering] began to confer … Boisjoly [Roger Boisjoly, an engineer who worked for Thiokol] and other engineers try one last time to persuade the four senior managers to continue to recommend against launch … recognise they are failing … give up…*
>
> *Mason reiterated some of Mulloy's [Lawrence Mulloy, manager, space rocket booster programmes, Kennedy Space Centre, who had shown the weakness of Thiokol's engineering arguments against launch on the data available] points and said that under the conditions they had discussed, he could not disagree with what Mulloy had said. He would recommend launch. Mason then asked each of the executives in turn, how they felt about it. Cal Wiggins said he recommended launch. Joe Kilminster said he recommended launch. Mason turned to Lund, who sat hesitating, making a few observations about the data, and shaking his head. After a few moments, Mason said "It's time to take off your engineering hat and put on your management hat."*

Feeling under huge pressure, reluctantly Lund votes with the others. The following day, *Challenger* was launched only to explode a few moments after take-off when the "O" rings failed. Mason's own description, before the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, of what he intended by that final dramatic intervention is revealing of what it is to perform authority. Having already been criticised harshly – and, Vaughan shows, unfairly – for "polling management and disenfranchising engineers", Mason explained his thinking as follows (Vaughan, 1996: 319):

> *I said, "Bob, you've got to put on your management hat, not your engineering hat". And my message was intended to be that we had all been spending our time there as engineers, looking at numbers and calculations and so forth. We now had to take that information and do some management with it. And there have been a lot of people who have characterised that expression like I was saying, "Don't be an engineer, be a manager," and that isn't the case. I think there's engineering management that has to take place, where you take the engineering data and*

> *make a management decision with it. So that's how I intended it, but how it was interpreted was variable depending on the people that were there.*

In the circumstances described, Mason quite literally performs by enacting the extant structure of authority in Morton Thiokol. As senior vice-president, he has the right to call time on discussion but only when the engineers have exhausted their case. He has the responsibility to ensure that the management team deliberates upon the engineering case, but also the duty to make sure that they make a decision based on the whole set of considerations bearing on the organisation's interests. However, he has no authority to compel his fellow three vice-presidents to make any particular decision. What he does have the authority to do is to highlight the importance for the organisation of sufficient consensus being reached on a really major decision. So, he performs the ritual of calling out for each to vote in turn. When the chief engineer havers, Mason performs this ritual with almost operatic explicitness. He reminds Lund of his role; in so doing, he announces the nature of the authority being performed in this backstage meeting, but he also turns his announcement into a performative sentence. For, in his words to Lund, he literally enacts what he considers it means to "put one's management hat on".

In his evidence, Mason recognises, as many academic theorists from anthropologists to post-modernists have argued, that performances – even ritual performances – are not always received in the way that the ritual leader would want. As we explore further in the next chapter, the leadership performance can never wholly disambiguate itself for everyone present.

This example is not a case of leadership in triumph. What Mason is doing is initiating a climb-down for Thiokol. He is effectively moving the caucus to the point where Thiokol will throw in the towel on its attempt to persuade Kennedy and Marshall not to fly the *Challenger* the following day. Further, he is doing so in a situation in which some of his best engineers and their manager have severe reservations based on their professional judgement but on less than compelling evidence. Thiokol's credibility is on the line; Mason has to think about the long-term consequences for its contract with NASA. At the forefront of his mind is the importance of showing Thiokol making robust professional management judgements on the basis of the engineering evidence. However, he is arguably aware that the attempt to maintain his authoritativeness externally could jeopardise his authority internally. Nonetheless, Mason is able to rely on the rules, authorisation, status and pro-

cedure of the caucus as a ritual space in a particular hierarchical social setting.

Let us look again at the performance that Mason gives. In Vaughan's account, we see him shifting the emotional register of the Thiokol caucus from what we might term analytic concentration to collective solemnity by ensuring that the four vice-presidents "begin to confer". For an engineering corporation like Thiokol, "conferring" is a performance quite unlike hearing the engineers' presentations followed by questioning from other engineers. "Conferring" is the performance of consideration of the decision in the light of these technical considerations; "conferring" is what vice-presidents do when they are establishing the organisation's final position, and thus potentially its credibility with major clients and the wider community.

The other aspect of leadership performance that Mason illustrates is the requirement for leaders to legitimate their authority; that is, to enact their recognised right and duty to perform and to expect others to follow. In the hierarchical-enclave (in NDIT parlance) corporation that Thiokol appears in Vaughan's account, Mason's authority comes from the delicate duality of authorised status (summarised in his title as "senior vice-president") to commit the organisation collectively in a settlement where the organisation must give due weight to the discipline of engineering. Mason's three-stage performance – initiating "conferring" among vice-presidents, calling the votes and reminding Lund of the role he is expected to play and the type of considerations he is authorised (and duty bound) to bear in mind – makes authority legible to the participants in the caucus. The formal institutions that govern the privileges and duties of vice-presidents in a corporation like Thiokol, the less formal institutions that define the weight given to professional engineering judgement and the process of adversarial testing of that judgement within the bounded and bonded community of engineers, and the network of institutions that enable vice-presidents and engineers, contractors and clients etc. to collaborate, all these need to be made legible.

How, exactly, does Mason achieve this legibility? We can read a little behind Vaughan's lines to speculate that it must have been achieved in part by his performance in changing the emotional register. The emotion of analytic concentration required for the presentation and adversarial cross-examination of the engineering evidence may be adequate for making legible the authoritativeness of the engineers individually. It is not adequate for making legible the institutions under which the "management decision" is to be made. We know this because,

before Mason makes the famous invocation, Lund is clearly wobbling between his emotional loyalty to his engineers and his willingness to trust their professional judgement in going beyond what the available data strictly imply. For him at least, the emotional register of the previous stage of the ritual has persisted (after all, no anthropologist has ever suggested that every participant in a ritual simultaneously changes their state in exactly the same direction at exactly the same time; rituals fail as often as any other social practices do). Mason's (much criticised) imperative is required in order to shift not only Lund's attention from one type of consideration to another but, in order that he could do that, to shift his emotional register and therefore his loyalties and commitments.

However, as Mason's explanation to the Presidential Commission showed, legibility is always incomplete. For even as Mason performs his much quoted reminder to Lund to take off his engineering hat and put on his management hat, he is aware that what gets read from (or even "into") his words by those present (and by other interested parties later) may differ from his espoused intent (again, there are links here to the arguments proposed by Shotter, 2008). What he makes legible about the institutions of authority and leadership both for himself and for Lund is open to at least two interpretations.

Formal meetings and leader authority – the van Gogh example

The second example is drawn from Hajer and Uitermark's (2008) account of the performance of authority by the Mayor (Job Cohen) and the Alderman for Diversity (Ahmed Aboutaleb) of Amsterdam in the wake of the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 "by an Islamic extremist" (p. 5). They construe this as a crisis situation where two forms of leadership performance are required: firstly, to frame the event in terms that people can see as meaningful (a sensemaking account of leadership); and, secondly, to undertake this framing in settings which emphasise the legitimacy of the authority of the actor. As they note on this second point: "[A]uthority is not only dependent on what is said but also on who says it, how, and in what particular setting. The role of the setting can be used to amplify the impact of what is said" (p. 6).

Hajer and Uitermark analyse five settings in which authority was enacted: a press conference; the "manifestation of noise" (public protest against the murder); a speech in a mosque; an address to the City Council; and a talk show. Overall, they argue that Cohen and Aboutaleb reframed the meaning of their discourse about "keeping things together"

from one of understanding and dialogue to tough action through a combination of:

- providing calm assurance that existing institutions were able to deal with the crisis (Cohen);
- changing the emotional register to express strong feelings and to link these "to unifying symbols, public policy commitments and government institutions" (p. 15) (Aboutaleb); and
- establishing who are friends ("the well meaning" rather than the native Dutch) and who are enemies (the ill meaning rather than the "foreign" Muslims) (Cohen and Aboutaleb).

The authors appear as interested in the dramaturgical as the discursive aspects of these performances (and thus the paper's interest to us here). They differentiate two distinct types of platform: the constitutional (press conference, City Council); and non-constitutional (the other three). In the hierarchical setting of the constitutional platform, where the source of his positional authority was clear and the emotional tone of his speech was appropriate to his immediate audience, Cohen's procedural assurance was, Hajer and Uitermark report, understood and appreciated by his peers and subordinates. However, on the non-constitutional platform, for example the talk show, they suggest that Cohen's "pedagogical tone" (p. 13) as he articulated the city councils position combined, we would argue, with the absence of the usual manifestations of his authority outside of the hierarchical setting (e.g. being heard in relative silence rather than being constantly interrupted at close quarters) in part served to undermine the perceived effectiveness of his leadership. The failure was not in the content – which was very similar to his speech to the City Council – but in his failure to make his authority legitimate and legible by finding the appropriate emotional tone for the setting (perhaps this was a performance that Cohen could not give, and should not have tried to give).

Aboutaleb, on the other hand, takes the opportunity of the speech in the mosque and a subsequent appearance on the same talk show to speak in a much more emotionally charged tone, in particular in the former setting, to establish the authority for his message of non-tolerance of the "ill-meaning". Of course, not all members of the diverse audience created by the presence of the media require the same emotional tone. As Hajer and Uitermark (2008) note: "Aboutaleb alienated the Moroccans of the Al-Kabir mosque that he addressed, but gained authority as, through the media reports of his speech, he reassured the native Dutch communities" (p. 16).

Emotional tone and leadership authority

What can we draw from these two examples about the performing of leadership? Crucially, we need to understand that the efficacious performance of leadership requires the adoption of an emotional tone appropriate to the moment, message and setting; in other words, we need to see emotion as the *immediate* object transitively performed. This emotion becomes a *mechanism* by which the *deeper* object of transitive performance – that is, the forms of *authority* that are sought to be used in the particular institutional setting – can be made *legible* and *legitimate* to others involved in the ritual. It is only once authority is established that *commitment* will be forthcoming from others to a decision or a position.

This emphasis on the importance of emotion to the performance of leadership both looks back to the discussion of emotional intelligence in Section 2 and forward to the consideration of authenticity in Section 4. There is an increasing prescriptive literature on both topics. There is, however, little empirical research that focuses on the expression of emotion by organisational leaders. The only published study seems to be that undertaken by Samra-Fredericks (2004) in which she observed, recorded and transcribed the interactions of managerial elites in one company over a prolonged period of time, albeit her data in the paper relates mostly to the emotional displays of one manager (Eddie) which she maintains, but does not really demonstrate, had consequences for the company. She adopts the framework described by Nash (1989) which contains four elements:

- rhetorical devices only move people when they are correlated with great themes or matters of empathetic concern (e.g. love, loyalty, death);
- stance involves the embodiment of the emotion (e.g. attitude, posture, demeanour);
- design of the pattern of the text (e.g. structure – there is much more on this topic in Chapters 6 and 7 of this section); and
- choice of the metaphors (e.g. content).

Samra-Fredericks (2004) acknowledges that Nash's approach is based on consideration of literary texts, yet she maintains that it serves to illuminate aspects of her data. Her initial two extracts feature Eddie giving short and ostensibly spontaneous speeches at formal meetings called to discuss company strategy where, she argues, the "great theme" was survival. In keeping with much discourse analysis there is

no generalisable account of context in the paper (indeed, there is not much detail about specific context, such as the seniority, role, age etc. of Eddie). This is particularly disappointing as she observes that evoking the sympathies of others "requires more than a 'one-off' moment of great oratory. Human interaction is more complex, necessitating great interpersonal effort across time/space … a series of emotional displays … inextricably intertwined with forms of rationalities" (p. 1108).

The first example highlights the use of a striking metaphor – "broke my heart" – in a text that within its pattern contains familiar rhetorical devices (both contrasts and lists of three – see Chapter 8). She suggests that this moving emotional display (in what appears a hierarchical setting) meant that Eddie achieved the authority to make "points that 'stuck' and which then needed to be addressed" (p. 1121).

In the second extract, she draws attention to the rhythm of repetition, the use of the word "we" (potentially indicative of an enclave moment in NDIT parlance), another striking metaphor and a stance of animated concern. She provides a graphic description of how all this comes together:

> *Eddie was leaning across the table and … the "drill" sound was accompanied by gestures mimicking the "idea" of a "damn great drill". Visually, it was like a gun pressed against his chest and when activated … his hands, arms and upper body vibrated* (p. 1126).

The third example deals with an interaction between Eddie, a colleague (Martin) and the Managing Director (MD) of the company within the same setting, in which Samra-Fredericks (2004) suggests that Eddie is testing the boundaries of acceptable emotion, in this case through anger (in NDIT terms, it seems to represent an assertion of enclave or isolate feedback to the dominant hierarchical settlement). Indeed, she shows how Martin attempts to personalise the encounter before both he and the MD "endeavour to regulate the emotional crescendo … they also attempt to play down its legitimacy" (p. 1131). In other words, it seems that they are seeking to undermine Eddie's implicit claim for authority through presenting his emotional register as inappropriate to the context; she quotes Waldron (2000: 75) as noting "emotions must be detected, manufactured, elicited and controlled as ordinary working relationships are enacted".

That emotions are usually finely modulated in organisations is often only made apparent when they cease to be; the management of emotion by leaders is a theme we return in more depth in Section 4. Nonetheless,

Samra-Fredericks (2004) is clear that "Eddie's improvization there-and-then did get the rational, emotional, moral and relational 'job done'" (p. 1136, quotation marks in original); management of emotion does not necessarily, therefore, mean the suppression of emotion. However, we want to argue that emotional tone is also important to our metaphorical view of leadership and it is to this topic that we turn next in Chapter 6.

6
The Warp and Weft of Organisational Life: Relationships and Performative Leadership

Introduction

In Section 2 we introduced two frameworks which are central to our consideration of performative leadership. The first is the E-N-A framework which provides the main structure of this section, considering aspects of enactment, narrative and audience in more detail. The second was the distinction between leadership "is" performance and leadership "as" performance. Chapter 5 investigated the idea that leadership "is" the enactment of performance in more detail, considering the impact which rituals in their broadest sense have on the creation and maintenance of the authority of leaders. This present chapter now turns to the notion of the enactment of leadership "as" performance.

Leadership "as" performance

Schechner (2003) argues that "happenings" and "performance art" are attempts to draw the routines of everyday life into the sphere of performance and, in so doing, challenge the assumptions and activities of the society in which the performance is given. Increasingly influenced by postmodernist philosophy, performance studies has become more and more concerned with revelations of the explicit and implicit exhibitions of power (gender, sexuality, race) which are highlighted through the dramatic presentation of routine interactions. This influence has generated a strong interest in the role of performance as an act of resistance, in which prevailing social norms are challenged with a view to their transformation, typically through recourse to irony (McKenzie, 2001). Whilst being focused on the same realm of ideas, we are as interested here in the ways in which such everyday performances can

confirm the authority of leaders, typically working within those social norms (and the theoretical part of this argument draws extensively on Peck *et al.*, 2009).

As we noted in the Prologue to this book, performance has already seeped into the language of organisations and we identify three dimensions (efficiency, effectiveness and efficacy; see also Dickinson *et al.*, 2009). Within mainstream organisational theory, however, performativity is generally understood as the ability to produce goods efficiently and effectively, critically reinterpreted by Lyotard (1984) as those techniques and modes of regulation that mobilize comparisons in performance as a means of influence or control. In contrast, we have been arguing that much of the impact of leadership comes through its efficacy in shaping sensemaking (and thus conceptions of what constitutes efficiency and effectiveness) on its way to securing organisational commitment in specific institutional settings.

In contrast, within literary theory, performativity refers to the active and creative functioning of language; that is, those utterances which perform the action to which they refer, such as "I promise" (Austin, 1975). In addition to calling attention to the generative properties of language, the approach privileges social and linguistic convention above authorial intent (Culler, 2000); the act of promising is performed by speaking the words "I promise" but the act takes its meaning from the social conventions (institutions) surrounding the making of promises (Culler, 1981). Derrida (1988) offers a reading of performativity which privileges citation and iteration; it is in the ability of a performative utterance to be perceived as such that its success (or failure) resides, an analysis extended by Butler's definition of performativity as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler, 1993a: 2).

Butler's first formulation of performativity theory presented gender and sexuality as continuous enactments of behavioural norms, in which agents retain the possibility of subversively varying the compulsory repetition of norms through parodic performance. These may render claims to the "naturalness" of normative prescriptions problematic and open the possibility to alternative formulations (Butler, 1990). The potential difficulty here is the implication of voluntarism on behalf of the agent – that is, it could be read as suggesting that individuals may somehow wilfully decide how to enact their gender – without consideration of the institutional constraints. On this reading, Butler's initial account seems to overlook *how* this choice is possible given the complex cultural norms in play.

Crucial to the later development of Butler's analysis is the Derridan notion of *citationality*. This offers an account which mediates between social norms and the gendered individuals who perform them. This constitutes a decisive turning away from the notion of the performative as a performance by a sovereign subject consciously selecting from a repertoire of possibilities. Indeed, the distinctive function of the performative is its productive role in constructing what it purports to be. As Butler (1993a) observes:

> *[D]iscursive performativity appears to produce that which it names, to enact its own referent, to name and to do, to name and to make. Paradoxically, however, this productive capacity of discourse is derivative, a form of cultural iterability or rearticulation, a practice of resignification, … What is invoked by the one who speaks or inscribes the law is the fiction of a speaker who wields the authority to make his [sic] words binding, the legal incarnation of the divine utterance* (p. 108).

Indeed, what is delivered through processes of reiteration and citation is nothing less than the organised subject itself:

> *[P]erformativity is neither free-play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it simply be equated with performance. Performativity cannot be understood outside a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for a subject* (p. 95).

This formulation is consistent with two of our central arguments in this book. The first is that the self is social and episodic, created and re-created in our interactions with the world. The second is that institutional context is central to the form and nature of those interactions. This consistency makes it possible to locate Butler's later conception within the framework of institutional theory (and not only within the post-modernist perspective in which her work was developed).

Let us focus on the second argument; possibilities for action are circumscribed by institutional context and agency itself arises out of institutional constructions (see Hasselbladh & Bejerot, 2007 for an example). On this reading, organisational environments serve as contexts for iterations of required behaviours and the citation of norms create and discipline subjectivities and inter-relations through reiteration over time. While the logic of iteration is suggestive of recurrent patterning,

there is no assumption that there is a natural state which continued instances merely reflect; on the contrary, iteration within organisations calls attention to the potential to re-confirm, shift or challenge the organisational settlement within which the iteration takes place. Iteration is thus the process through which both organisational settlements and personal identities are enacted through repeated performances (citations) of norms of speech and action.

Thus, Butler's later work on citationality (1993a) links us back to the idea that many aspects of human behaviour can be seen "as" a performance. In other words, behaviour that is only performed once is still performed. Nonetheless, even those events that are "once-behaved" are "…constructed from behaviours previously behaved … everyday life also involves years of training and practice, of learning appropriate culturally specific bits of behaviour" (Schechner, 2003: 29). As Butler (1993a) suggests, it is in the very non-identical repetition of these once-performed events that the potential for change may lie. In elaborating her position, Butler draws on Derrida's sustained critical commentary on the metaphysics of presence, which replaces the logic of identity (fixity) with that of the supplement, in which citations are open and consist of traces of other citations (Derrida, 1984). On this view, no action or speech may be purely present; rather, signification is produced through (re)-iteration and (re)-citation of prior actions, so that actions acquire meanings relative to other actions (relational) and over time (temporal). The implication is that while intransitive leadership actions are singular ("once performed"), they must contain the possibility of being repeatable (otherwise they cannot be "read" as leadership by an observer). This encompasses both "repetition" (in which what is repeated can be interpreted as the same as that undertaken in a prior performance) and "alterity" (where the performance can be interpreted as relevantly different from prior ones). Iterability entails reference to past occurrences and any given performance may be characterised as an enactment at the end of a chain of prior iterations.

This once again raises the question of the scope for individual leadership in institutional reform. Voluntaristic accounts, characterising discourse as principally linguistic and ideational and the result of subjective mental events on the part of agents (e.g. Hindess & Hirst, 1977; see 6 & Peck, 2002 for a critique), suggest the possibility of "infinite free-play" in which transcendent agents (in our case leaders) construct new discourses at will. While the attraction of such a perspective to those charged with leadership is understandably difficult to resist, Derrida (1984) is dismissive of such linguistic and ideational readings of discourse. While there can be

no "finality" to the overflow of meaning – each utterance or iteration remains open to a limited range of alternative interpretations – partial fixations may be generated socially (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

On this view, discourses are formed within specific organisational settlements through regularities in signification which provide an ensemble of differentiated positions ("subject positions") relationally constituted and reiterated through embodied citation over time (we are reminded of the discourses of the managers and academics in Druckett's university discussed in Chapter 3). As we note in the next chapter, many discourse theorists are interested in the relationship between narratives, processes of interpretation and the ways in which, in our terms, organisational settlements are created and maintained (see Zimmerman & Boden, 1991; Mumby, 1987). As we argued in the previous section, these settlements are typically resistant to attempts at change by discourse alone. In stark contrast to the suggestion that discourses are linguistic and ideational, therefore, we argue that discourses have a materiality which is institutionalised within norms and practices (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

To return to another issue explored in that earlier chapter, Fairhurst (2005) explores the institutional limits to leadership behaviour in the context of framing, defined as the ability to shape the received meaning of events/subjects, privileging one interpretation over another. While the practice of framing clearly suggests a role for agent behaviour, the importance of institutional context (and the materiality of the social world) must be acknowledged as limiting the range of meanings that events can be given; furthermore, as noted above, the legitimacy of the authority of the leader to undertake such framing has to be legible to potential followers. Once again, and as with twice-performed behaviour, the institutional setting for leadership behaviours becomes of paramount concern.

As with the literal interpretation of performance, this argument requires examples from within organisations. In looking at the everyday interactions of organisational actors, any researcher is necessarily influenced by Goffman's (2005 [1967]) *Interaction Ritual*. It is not possible to do justice to this seminal text here; however, it is possible to appreciate the line of argument through the following quotation:

> *in any society, whenever the physical possibility of spoken interaction arises, it seems that a system of practices, conventions, and procedural rules come into play which functions as a means of guiding and organizing the flow of messages. An understanding will prevail as to when and*

> *where it will be possible to initiate talk, amongst whom, and by means of what topics of conversations. A set of significant gestures is employed to initiate a spate of communication and as a means for the persons concerned to accredit each other as legitimate participants* (pp. 33–34).

These practices, understandings and gestures are so familiar that they typically go unnoticed. However, they are central to interactions within the warp and weft of organisational life. Much of the analysis of these interactions by discourse theorists has focused on sequencing and turn-taking (drawing also on the work of Sacks and Garfinkel); they also appear in our later chapter on audiences. However, as Zimmerman and Boden (1991) are keen to stress, these features do not mean that organisational members "enact the requirements of sequential structure in lock-step fashion. To take an elementary example, the occurrence of a question strongly projects an answer as a next positioned action, but questions can be evaded, ignored, challenged or otherwise operated on and transformed by the recipient" (p. 10). In Butlerian terms, the organisational routine can contain the potential for "alterity" as well as "repetition".

Interaction and iteration – four short examples

The first example is drawn from the film "Groundhog Day" (Ramis, 1993) (one not featured in Bell's 2008 book on exploring representations of organisations on the big screen). The scenario is probably familiar. Bill Murray (weather presenter) and Andie MacDowell (TV producer) are stranded in a remote American town by a snowstorm. He is re-living the same day over and over again and can remember all of the previous days and the conversations and incidents that took place within them. She appears in each of his days, but for her it is a unique experience. He decides to try and make her like him more than she does (which is not much). On successive days, they meet in the same hotel bar and the dialogue is presented in Box 6.1.

Of course, this is an implausible, if amusing, social interaction. Nonetheless, it serves to illustrate the point about "repetition" and "alterity" rather neatly. If Bill Murray had continued – day in and day out – to repeat his order for whisky and toasted the groundhog, then he would have made no progress in his bid to become more attractive to Andie MacDowell; we are reminded of the old adage: "if you always do the same thing, do not be surprised if you always get the same result." However, by altering his text – which for him, although not for

Box 6.1 Groundhog day

Phil – Bill Murray
Rita – Andie MacDowell

Scene – In the restaurant

Phil So what are the chances of getting out today?
Rita The van still won't start. Larry's working on it.
Phil Wouldn't you know it. Can I buy you a drink?
Rita OK
Phil Jim Beam, ice, water.
Barman For you miss?
Rita Sweet vermouth, on the rocks with a twist please.

[Phil nods to himself]

Same scene – next day

Phil What are the chances of getting out of town today?
Rita The van still won't start. Larry's working on it.
Phil Wouldn't you know it. Can I buy you a drink?
Rita OK
Phil Sweet vermouth, rocks with a twist please.
Rita The same. That's my favourite drink
Phil Mine too. It always makes me think of Rome, the way the sun hits the buildings in the afternoon
Rita What shall we drink to?
Phil To the groundhog

[Rita stares at him for a moment]

Rita I always drink to world peace

Same scene – next day

Phil Can I buy you a drink?
Rita OK
Phil Sweet vermouth, rocks with a twist please
Bartender For you miss?
Rita The same. That's my favourite drink.
Phil Mine too. It always makes me think of Rome, the way the sun hits the buildings in the afternoon

Box 6.1 Groundhog day – *continued*

Rita	What shall we drink to?
Phil	I like to say a prayer and drink to world peace
[Rita smiles, re-evaluating him]	
Rita	To world peace
Phil	World peace
[They clink glasses]	

her, involves citation of previous interactions – he starts to make a better impression. It is also worth bearing in mind that the Scene draws much of its humour from the familiarity of the social setting and its consequences for both the content and sequence of the dialogue (although, as the person paying, we might have expected him to invite her to order first, but this would undermine the set-up essential to the comic effect).

The second example (Mesiek & Barry, 2007) could be seen as an organisational version of this phenomenon (albeit that the impact is on both sets of participants to the interaction). They recount their findings from studying over 12 months 30 (supposedly) identical performances of a production by an external theatre company within a home care organisation. Managers within the organisation defined the content of the play, were always present when it was staged and set-up discussion afterwards. Their assumption was that "active participation in the performances and discussions would create an unproblematic, shared understanding of the [organisation's] values" (p. 1820, parentheses added); this view apparently was unchanged at the end of the 12 months. However, the researchers found that, over time, the "active-audience performances changed … employees remembered different aspects … and became aware of different problems … these changes followed employees' conversations about the organizational theatre between the performances" (pp. 1820–1821). Thus the interests and expectations of the audience, and the approaches of the actors, were subject to "alterity".

The third example (Orlikowski, 1996) is again drawn from organisational life and is one of the first empirical studies that provides evidence for the notion of situated practice; that is, change is constant and inevitable as organisational members adopt and adapt work routines over time. On this account, "organizational transformation is … an ongoing

improvisation enacted by organizational actors trying to make sense of and act coherently in the world" (p. 65) and "[E]very action taken by organization members either reproduces existing organizational properties or it alters them" (p. 66). Basing her research in a US software company implementing technological innovation in its procedures, Orlikowski (1996) concludes that "the ongoing, gradual, and reciprocal adjustments, accommodations, and improvisations enacted … subtly and significantly altered the organizing practices and structures … transforming the texture of the work, nature of knowledge, patterns of interaction, distribution of work, forms of accountability and control, and mechanisms of coordination" (p. 69).

These are major claims for the impact of "alterity". In particular, the penultimate point concerning forms of accountability is intriguing; whilst our development of NDIT would predict that "alterity" can reform the relationships and roles within an organisational settlement, it assumes that changes to that settlement – which are suggested by innovations in the forms of accountability – would be unlikely to be produced by "alterity" alone. However, closer examination reveals that these innovations – which do indeed suggest a move away from an individualist to a more hierarchical way of organising – were designed into the technology by senior management as a "deliberate change" (p. 75); overall, then, it would appear that this paper gives considerable support to the perspective on profound change in organisations that we are advocating.

The fourth example also focuses on organisational routine (Feldman, 2000) as a source of continuous change (as she notes, there is a large literature on other aspects of the impact of the routine in organisational life). Her focus – and her initial assumption – was on organizational routines as "*repeated patterns of behaviour that are bound by rules and customs and that do not change very much from one iteration to another*" (p. 611, italics in original, emphasis added). However, on looking at routines of hiring, training, budgeting etc. in a student housing department of a US university, she found that "most of the routines I was studying were undergoing substantial change" (p. 611) which was not the consequence of the organisation's programme of planned innovation or a response to crisis. Her analysis of this phenomenon builds on the work of Pentland and Reuter (1994) who she cites in arguing that "an organizational routine is not a single pattern but, rather, a set of possible patterns – enabled and constrained by a variety of organizational, social, physical and cognitive structures – from which organizational members enact particular performances"

(p. 491). She suggests that "change is more than choosing from among a repertoire of choices, and the repertoire itself, and the rules that govern choice within a repertoire can also change" (p. 613). Much of the change observed by Feldman resulted from the participants' sense-making on the impact "of previous *iterations* of the routine" (p. 614, italics added); "we should think about performative routines as a flow that includes the broad range of thoughts, feelings and actions that people experience as they engage in work" (p. 622).

The reference to the potential for "alerity" to affect the rules that guide employees' choices again suggests that adaptation of the routine may be able to impact upon the form of the organisational settlement. However, Feldman's (2000) discussion reveals that these changes relate to the refinement of the relationship between the hierarchy and the lowerarchy within the extant organisational settlement.

The fifth – and final – example (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) develops this line of enquiry even further, albeit without providing any original empirical data. Their hypothesis is that organisations are always – and necessarily – in a state of change through "the reweaving of actors" webs of beliefs and habits of action to accommodate new experiences obtained through interaction (p. 570). Partially also influenced by the literature that explores the implications for organisational theory of complexity theory (see, for example, Pascale, 1999), Tsoukas and Chia build on the work of Orlikowski, Feldman and others (e.g. Greenwood & Hinings, 1996) to argue that "we tend to lose sight of the subtle micro-changes that sustain and, at the same time, potentially corrode stability" (p. 568). They postulate that "[C]hange must not be thought of as a property of organization. Rather, organization must be understood as an emergent property of change" (p. 570). On this view, organisation is a product of change as, firstly, "it is a socially defined set of rules aiming at stabilizing an ever-mutating reality by making human behaviour more predictable" and, secondly, it is "an outcome, a pattern, emerging from the reflective application of the very same rules in local contexts over time" (p. 570).

This is an intriguing argument, one that favours – as we have seen many academics' perspectives do – "alterity" over "repetition", almost as much as an act of prescription as description. They contend that organisational researchers should concern themselves more with "performative accounts … their focus on situated human agency unfolding in time, offer us insights into the actual emergence and accomplishment of change" (p. 572). However, whilst their paper is initially linked to the previous ideas of routine, it becomes interested as it develops its

position in human agency in the process of "planned" change. It also seems to link to the third conception of organisational culture – ambiguity – in the Meyerson and Martin (1987) formulation that we discussed in Chapter 3; that is, it contains a significant exploration of the basis of the sensemaking of individuals in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues within and beyond the organisation. Whilst, in our view, this approach tends to overstate the power of organisational members' ideas by themselves to achieve change in the current organisational settlement, it does stress that they possess the potential to interact with their own thoughts and feelings in a manner that enables them to re-imagine their responses to the organisation. We would support their view that "[O]rganizational categories and rules are constantly adjusted, modified, or even ignored in the carrying out of actual organizational tasks" (p. 577); however, we would suggest that these categories and rules are not fundamentally changed as a consequence (and we may also have doubts about the "constantly" if it is implying more than the rather trivial point that agent A's approach to a task will necessarily differ from that of Agent B).

Overall, we think these examples make the case for the importance of the warp and weft of human interactions in the development of the rules, roles and procedures within an existing organisational settlement. Furthermore, there are obvious opportunities for leaders to intervene in this sensemaking of the routine to encourage either continuity or change through using a discourse that favours "repetition" or "alterity". As Tsoukas and Chia (2002) helpfully conclude: "[L]ooking at change from within, managers need to be attentive to the historically shaped interpretive codes (i.e. the discursive templates) underlying organizational practices, and how such codes and the associated practices mutate over time … In short, mangers need to refine their sensitivity to be able to *perceive* subtle differences" (p. 579). We shall see similar points arising out of the work of discourse theorists in the next chapter.

Emotion and everyday interactions

Despite the examples provided above, it may still be suggested that interactions that take place in the comings and goings of organisational life are essentially trivial. Peters and Kashima (2007) cite sources that suggest that up to 70% of conversations are spent exchanging anecdotes, gossip, legends or biographies. However, they show that "social talk has implications for the structure of society because it can

lead to emotion sharing, a phenomenon in which a) a narrator and an audience share the same emotional response to the same social target and b) at least the audience realizes they are sharing this experience" (p. 780). Developing this idea, they argue that "[W]hen the social sharing of emotional talk leads to emotion sharing, it should have three simultaneous social consequences … it should create a coalition between the narrator and his or her audience … configure the relationship that the narrator and the audience have with the target of the talk … and co-ordinate their target-directed actions" (p. 780). Their research data leads them to conclude: "[E]motion sharing is sufficient for coalition creation. When narrators expressed emotions that were equally plausible responses to competent and incompetent actions, participants felt most bonded with narrators who expressed (a) warm emotions (admiration or pity) in response to a friend's actions and (b) cold emotions (envy and disgust) in response to an enemy's actions" (p. 792).

As with literal and transitive performances of leadership, therefore, metaphorical and intransitive performances of leadership also require the adoption of an emotional tone that is sensitive to both the institutional and specific social context within which the interaction takes place. Management of leaders' own emotions – and the shaping of the emotions of others – are once again central to the efficacious performance of the leadership role, where efficacy results in sensemaking that will underpin future or reinforce current commitment to organisational decisions and directions (which, of course, may include commitment to change). Whilst the performance of appropriate emotional displays within ritual settings may seem a daunting enough challenge for leaders, the prospect of exercising such conscious self-discipline in all organisational interactions may simply seem unrealistic. Nonetheless, this is where the argument seems to be leading: the great opportunity for leaders is that everything they do and say has the potential to shape the sensemaking of others in ways beneficial (or not) to the organisation … and the great burden for leaders is that everything they do and say has the potential to shape the sensemaking of others in ways beneficial (or not) to the organisation. Of course, these everyday interactions are made easier to navigate by the shared understandings of the practices and gestures within which they may take place (and this points to the connection between successful leadership and sector knowledge that is a commonplace of a number of leadership texts, e.g. Eglene *et al.*, 2007).

Furthermore, the emphasis in ideas of re-iteration and re-citation on repetition gives important profile to the often overlooked temporal

aspect of leadership. The notion of performing leadership stresses that these performances must sustain both legitimacy and legibility over time if the commitment of organisational members is to be gained and retained.

However, in looking at Peters and Kashima's (2007) focus on narration and audience, we are straying onto the territory of the next two chapters. It is with the nature of narratives in organisations that we now continue our exploration of performing leadership.

7
A Beginning, a Middle and an End: Narratives in Organisations

Introduction

This chapter explores the nature of narratives – of myths, stories, anecdotes – in organisational life. It starts by looking at a selection of accounts of structural forms in narratives before focusing on their use in organisations. This focus will highlight three strands in the literature on narratives in organisations: firstly, the emphasis placed on organisational myths by a school of writers concerned with organisational culture during the 1980s and 1990s; secondly, the importance attributed to the analysis of organisational discourse since the mid-1990s; and, thirdly, the efficacy attributed to the use of stories in the pursuit of organisational change over a similar period. There are strong links back to – and examples that illustrate – the notions of postmodernism and sensemaking introduced in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the crucial influence of context is glimpsed on several occasions without any serious attempts being made to articulate any framework within which it could be coherently characterised; the importance of the NDIT framework introduced in Chapter 3 is thus reinforced.

It is also worth being explicit what this chapter is not about. Over the past decade there has been an explosion in the number of techniques recommended for using story-related devices in the process of organisational change (see, for example, Harwood, 2004). All of them are similar in being unsupported by either robust theoretical foundations or compelling empirical testimony.

The structural form of stories

The title of this chapter derives from Aristotle's (1991) reflections on plot, which gives an indication of the longevity of the interest in the

ways in which effective narratives – in his case for plays – can be crafted; indeed, this is one of the characteristics of narratives with which most of us are familiar. However, there are other ways of thinking about these structures that need to be considered by leaders reviewing their approaches to narrative.

Let us begin, though, with plot. Following Gardner (1991), the beginning – the exposition – should establish character and situation giving the listener "everything that is necessary if he [sic] is to believe and understand the ensuing action" (p. 186). This exposition will typically involve a protagonist (with whom the audience is normally intended to identify) and an antagonist (who will attempt to frustrate the ambitions of the protagonist). Whilst in fiction the protagonist and antagonist are usually human agents, in the plots of leaders both the former (e.g. the local department) and the latter (e.g. the organisational centre) may be more abstract. The middle will typically contain a number of setbacks which the protagonist must overcome and that result from the actions of the antagonist. The end will present a resolution where the protagonist can be seen to prevail over the antagonist (or at least have the clear opportunity so to do). This account of narrative is applicable to a variety of forms (see Bell, 2008, for a discussion of the common formal structure of films).

This broad approach is underpinned by two fundamental assumptions. Firstly, it presupposes a "single recuperable story" (Richardson, 1987) within a linear development of time; Richardson suggests that this model is appropriate for the "natural narratives" that we are discussing here. Secondly, narratives inevitably represent the point of view of an individual. As Ochs (1997) points out "stories normally have a point to make … stories are not so much depictions of fact as they are construals of happenings" (pp. 192–193); furthermore, such plots privilege one account of events and their consequences – in Goffman's terms, favour one frame – over others that may be available.

Despite the familiarity of this structure, there are a number of variations that arise in the organisational literature. For example, Denning (2007), in a text on communication by leaders, argues that "successful leaders … first, they get attention. Then they stimulate desire, and only then do they reinforce with reasons" (p. 27). As with many of the (increasingly numerous) books in this area, Denning neither explains why his approach to plot is theoretically superior to that of authors active in the literary tradition (arguably from Aristotle to Gardner) nor gives more than anecdotal accounts of this approach in action. This is in keeping, as we have argued earlier, with the rather neglectful

attitude that organisational writers sometimes have to long-standing intellectual achievements in those fields into which they are now straying. On the more positive side, we would argue that Denning is convincing in his account of the deficiencies of much organisational communication (i.e. define problem, analyse problem, and recommend solution), in particular in his emphasis on the important emotional appeal that stories can exercise (in his words, "stimulate desire").

Aristotle (1991) also showed that different kinds of institutional settings call for distinct styles of rhetoric; that is, "discourse calculated to influence an audience toward some end" (Gill & Whedbee, 1997: 157). He distinguished between: the deliberative rhetoric of the debating hall; the adversarial rhetoric of the law courts; and the display or "epideictic" rhetoric of praise (see Peck *et al.*, 2004a and Chapter 5 for the ways in which these styles relate to ways of organising introduced in Chapter 3). From the outset, therefore, analysis of rhetoric has been sensitive to the context in which it is deployed, and again raises one of the central concerns of this book: how can we characterise context? This sensitivity also leads into a consideration of genre, where the choice of one set of features broadly understood to be specific to that genre "establishes the rhetorical parameters of a text, determining not only its structure but also its vocabulary, syntax, argumentative moves and narrative appeals" (Gill & Whedbee, 1997: 164).

Many of the formal narratives of organisations take the form of quests. One of the most obvious examples is the strategic plan. Heralded by a mission for the organisation which is the protagonist, stalked by competitors that must be bettered and replete with setbacks (weaknesses and threats) that have to be overcome, and ending with the promise of a successful future if it can prevail. Of course, the paradox of such plans – and perhaps the reason for their ubiquity – is that they are typically presented as if they are the rational analyses criticised by Denning when their impact may reside more in their very resonance with the form of a particular long-standing literary genre. Barry and Elmes (1997) in an influential theoretical paper on strategy as narrative argue that: "the successful strategic story may depend less on such tools as comprehensive scanning, objective planning, or meticulous control/feedback systems and more on whether it stands out from other organizational stories, is persuasive, and invokes retelling" (p. 433); in other words, its impact may depend on its emotional resonance.

From their empirical study of one example of organisational restructuring, Brown and Humphreys (2003) are clear about the implications of this insight for management: "the 'successful' leadership of

change fundamentally requires the molding and manipulating of people's understanding rather than material things … need to work at providing other groups with a narrative that contains explanations for current events and future projections" (p. 139). The connection with accounts of sensemaking is obvious. There is also a link here to the discussion of organisational myths which dominated writing on organisational narrative in the 1980s and 1990s and which is explored later in this chapter.

Barry and Elmes (1997) suggest that effective strategic narratives encompass both strategic credibility (being compelling verbally as well as being written down, having a clear voice and perspective, ordering congruent with familiar plot lines and having regard for the reader) and strategic defamiliarization (epic stories of design based on interpretation of events and issues, futuristic stories full of detailed planning and purist stories of positioning structured around typologies of organisational characteristics). They also suggest that in their experience "entrepreneurs and senior executives tell very different tales" (p. 447) without speculating as to the institutional roles and rules which might shape these disparate stories. As Barry and Elmes (1997) also acknowledge, there are other genres, ones perhaps less available or attractive to organisational leaders as they develop their narratives; farce, tragedy, romance and comedy may actually be more common genres in the stories of organisational life than the quest narratives of the leaders.

Some of the other issues to be considered are rather more diffuse and it is only possible, again following Gardner (1991), to introduce some of the major themes here. Perhaps one of the most important is the creation of verisimilitude (i.e. the use of compelling detail in order to create the impression in the listener that "this is how my/the world is"). In particular, effective narratives focus on the human; "all we need for our sympathy to be roused is that the writer communicates with power and conviction the similarities in his character's experience and our own" (p. 43). Whilst, as noted above, protagonists can be abstract, the importance of a human agency to the impact is widely acknowledged (see Chatman, 1978). Furthermore, Gardner argues, the agent must act, and the plot must enable this agency to be exercised over a comprehensible period of time, with elements of delay and thus suspense. Mellon (1992) and Lawley and Tompkins (2000) summarise some of the characteristics of a well-formed narrative as including: beginning and ending; movement and a sense of direction; imaginative landscapes within which the story is played out; journeying

through the elements; seasons and moods; struggle and transformation; paradox; characters (good and bad); tricksters and guides; companions (animal, human or celestial); personifications (trees, rocks etc); and themes of power and of protection.

In one of the most thoughtful and thorough accounts of the ways in which organisational members seek to generate meaning through stories, Gabriel (2000) identifies eight poetic tropes. These are: attribution of motive; attribution of causal connections; attribution of responsibility; attribution of unity; attribution of fixed qualities; attribution of emotion; attribution of agency; and attribution of providential significance (p. 36). Overall, though, Gabriel's concern is more with analytical tropes; that is, the ways in which researcher's can "delve deeper into the story … analytic interpretations aim at unlocking the inner meaning of a story" (p. 43). In particular, Gabriel, in common with many researchers, is interested in what stories can reveal about organisational culture and politics. In contrast, the focus of this chapter is on the "poetic" rather than the "analytical"; its intention is to alert organisational leaders to the ways in which they can create and sustain meaning (or, in other words, sensemake). Nonetheless, the importance of members' attributions to the performance of organisational leadership is one that will recur.

This brief consideration of plot, genre and some other aspects of narrative illustrate the richness of the extant writing on which theoretical and empirical accounts of and approaches to organisational leadership could draw. In fact, few texts do so, choosing in many cases to focus instead on one specific type of story: the organisational myth.

Myths in organisations

Much of the initial interest in narratives in organisations originated in the 1980s and 1990s when organisational culture became a major preoccupation both of theorists (e.g. Pettigrew, 1979) and more populist writers (e.g. Schein, 1985). Much of the focus was on the importance of myths as carriers and creators of such culture (e.g. Mahler, 1988; Bowles, 1989; Gabriel, 1991). As one early paper by Mitroff and Kilmann (1975) proclaims: "[W]hile organizations typically generate stories of all kind, there is one type that is of special interest, what we call 'epic myths of the organization' … the corporate myth is the 'spirit of the organization'" (pp. 18–19). This suggests that a very short detour into two of the major debates that informed con-

ceptions of organisational culture may be helpful in understanding and critiquing writings on organisational myth.

Firstly, there is a predominant assumption that culture is unitary and thus a source of organisational integration. The following quote captures this assumption: "the way we do things around here" (Ouchi & Johnson, 1978). At the same time, these unitary assumptions about culture are also rippled through accounts of organisational myths; that is, they are assumed to convey shared beliefs, fears etc. that are consistent and consensual across the organisation. For example, Wilkins (1984) argues that they are "powerful in passing on a culture because they are like maps that help people know how things are done in a particular group" (p. 43). This unitary assumption continues to inform the work of more recent organisational gurus on storytelling (e.g. Denning, 2007).

As we discussed in Chapter 3, Meyerson and Martin (1987) argue that this assumption is erroneous. Whilst the "integration" approach views culture as an integrating force – "the social or normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group of organisational members" (p. 624) – the "differentiation" perspective emphasises that culture is composed of a collection of values and beliefs, some of which may be contradictory, held by identifiable and disparate sub-cultures. A third characterisation – "ambiguity" – suggests that manifestations of culture are characterised by complexity where differences in meaning and values may be seen as irreconcilable and "individuals share some viewpoints, disagree about some, and are ignorant and indifferent to others. Consensus, dissensus and confusion coexist" (p. 637). On this view, culture is continually changing as the interpretations made by, and the patterns of connections between, individuals form and reform; there is a clear link to social constructionism in this conception as discussed in Chapter 4 (and this becomes even more influential in the second of the two debates).

The unitary – integration – view that characterises most of the writing on organisational myth is challenged in a much cited paper by Boje (1995) based on a study of storytelling within the Disney corporation: "[O]rganizations cannot be registered as one story, but instead are a multiplicity, a plurality of stories and story interpretations in struggle with one another" (p. 1001). Helmer (1993) makes a similar point derived from his study of a harness-racing track where organisational "members enact dissonance as well as harmony" (p. 43). Whilst the pursuit of integration may be postulating an epic quest, the presence of differentiation is enabling the presentation of the

organisational narrative as a farce, tragedy, comedy or whatever (e.g. Jeffcut, 1993, presents one influential categorisation that we will return to shortly).

The second debate is between those who view culture as something an organisation possesses (e.g. Wilkins & Ouchi, 1983) and those who view culture as what constitutes our conceptions of organisations (e.g. Bate, 1995). To put it another way: the first treats culture as a critical variable of organisation; the second sees organisations not as *having* cultures but as *being* cultures (Bate, 1995). Again, the social constructionist turn of thought is apparent here. To relate this idea directly to narrative would suggest that the organisational stories told by employees serve to create the organisation in their telling. In Weick's terms, narratives are central to the organisational sensemaking as "stories are not a symptom of culture; culture is a symptom of storytelling" (Weick & Browning, 1986: 251 and see page page 60 for further discussion).

One of the more persuasive account of myths in the organisational literature is presented by Bowles (1989), drawing on the work of Campbell (1949, 1976). The first role of myth here is to provide a sense of awe, "the numinous … something experienced rather than understood" (p. 408). This is an important dimension of myths, linking to Mahler's (1988) argument that they "express a culture's most fundamental conceptions of meanings, purposes, and limitations of human existence" (p. 347).

The highpoint of this literature on organisational myth – and one of particular potential relevance to leaders – is probably another paper by Boje *et al.* (1982: 19) which suggests that interventions in such myths can be deployed in the service of organisational development. Building on the work of Thompson (1967), the paper articulates four sorts of myths that:

1. Create, maintain and legitimise past, present or future actions and consequences;
2. Maintain and conceal political interests and value systems;
3. Help explain cause and effect relationships; and
4. Rationalise the complexity and turbulence of activities and events.

They suggest a life cycle approach to myths which posits four stages to myth development (i.e. *development* – developing myth; *maturation* – solid myth; *decline* – myth split; and *reformulation* – myth shift). Once the nature and the stage of the predominant myths have been established, then four potential interventions are suggested: *demythifying*

(challenging myths); *myth exchange* (understanding competing myths); *myth balancing* (acknowledging that complexity of organisational life may be illuminated by a range of myths); and *myth enrichment* (inventing and socialising employees into new myths). This is a bold framework – although not one that has been generally picked up by either theoreticians or practitioners of organisational development – which at least warrants consideration by leaders in the construction of their narratives (and in particular their accounts of organisational quest). However, it has two obvious weaknesses: firstly, it seems to stress the rational push of myth at the expense of the emotional pull; and, secondly, it overlooks the role of myths in allocating responsibility or blame.

The importance of myth – as opposed to other forms of narratives – in much of the organisational literature of this period seems to derive in part from what appears now an overly simple distinction between stories (the "poetic") and facts (the "analytical") (see Gabriel, 1991) where the latter are seen as the basis for the former. Perhaps, it also reflects a certain grandiosity of behalf of academics; alternatively, it suggests that they were not – with the occasional exception of writers like Bowles and Mahler – very familiar with the prevailing definitions of myths (see Csapo, 2005 for a thorough discussion of myths, one enduring characteristic of which seems to be that people understand that the events did not happen in a world like the one we live in today).

Looking back, many writers seem to attribute the status of myth to narratives that are much more mundane if no less important; in their review of existing literature and their own experience, Martin *et al*. (1983), identify seven storylines that seem to recur in organisations. These are in most cases strikingly prosaic (e.g. "is the big boss human?", "will I get fired?"); not much suggestion of the numinous here notwithstanding that they may have emotional resonance for the participants. Ingersoll and Adams (1986) make a similar point, observing the apparent irony in all this talk of managerial myth when for the most part managers are staunchly anti-mythical; "in the modern age, which celebrates rationality and technique, we do not see ourselves being influenced by myth" (p. 365).

However, this emphasis on myth may have served to discourage organisational leaders from seeing their everyday stories as being as influential on organisational sensemaking – and thus on organisational commitment – as they both are and could be. Much of the critique of the myth literature (including the studies by Boje, 1995; Helmer, 1993,

cited above) derives from the field of organisational discourse; broadly speaking, this second approach – as these two studies exemplify – looks at the routine interactions of organisational members as well as the more staged proclamations of organisational leaders (or to put in the terms of a key distinction of this book, it focuses on once-performed *and* twice-performed behaviour). It is to this approach that we turn next.

Organisational discourse

Writing on discourse theory becomes significant in the academic literature on organisations during the mid-1990s onwards. As Oswick *et al.* (2000) note: "the study of discourse is emerging as one of the primary means of analysing complex organizational phenomena and engaging with the dynamic, and often illusive, features of organizing" (p. 1115). This observation on the importance of discourse to organisational studies also reveals the analytical focus of the studies to date. Although some recent papers – such as that by Hardy *et al.* (2000) considered below – start to consider the potential of discourse as a resource to leaders within organisations, the prime purpose of this academic enterprise is still to understand the behaviour of subjects (albeit there are surprisingly few studies of the discourse of leaders e.g. Harvey, 2001; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997b).

Organisational discourse has been described as the "languages and symbolic media we employ to describe, represent, interpret and theorize what we take to be the facticity of organizational life" (Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997: 1). Developing the ideas of writers such as Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Weick (1995), organisational discourse theorists largely also maintain that specific organisations are thus the products of the discourses through which we discuss them. In turn, those discourses shape the prevailing conceptions of organisations in an iterative process of construction.

Buchanan (2003) makes the link explicit in his case study of what he terms "polyvocality" in the interpretation of business process re-engineering in the NHS: "[P]ostmodern perspectives challenge singular or 'totalizing' theories or 'grand narratives' explaining social, political and economic phenomena, arguing instead for socially constructed views of reality based on multiple voices and interpretations" (p. 7). He positions his paper in the tradition that he terms the "processual-contextualist perspective" where "the unit of analysis is the process of change in context, which includes the external environment as well as internal history,

culture, structure, goals and politics of the organization" (p. 7). However, and in common with most material in the organisational discourse literature, there is no articulation of any theoretical frame for analysing context underpinning this case study; the implicit – and theoretically unsatisfactory – assumption seems to be that each context is unique.

Crucially, discourse theorists view organisations "not simply as social collectives where shared meaning is produced, but rather as sites of struggle where different groups compete to shape the social reality of organizations in ways that serve their own interests" (Buchanan, 2003: 182). Drawing explicitly on notions of framing that we have discussed earlier, Mumby (1987) maintains that "[A] political reading of narrative draws attention to the relationship between narrative structure and the process of interpretation and, as such, focuses on the ways by which dominant meaning systems arise" (p. 114). Similarly, Buchanan and Dawson (2007) argue that "narratives have causal functions and intent, in seeking not only to shape understanding of past events, but also to shape trajectories of change into the future" (p. 669). One of their main arguments is that researchers are themselves involved in telling stories in papers; "researcher narratives are crafted to persuade, to influence, to suggest lines of action, and to make things happen" (p. 671). The link between narrative interpretations and individual and group interests is a central conclusion of a significant number of empirical studies (e.g. Brown, 1998; Ng & De Cock, 2002; Currie & Brown, 2003; Heracleous, 2006). Given limitations of space, two studies – in addition to those by Boje (1995) and Helmer (1993) which were introduced above – will serve to illustrate the insights that can be derived from detailed analysis of organisational talk and text.

The earlier of these – Boje (1991) – is a good example of the benefits to be gained from fine-grain analysis of discourse, in this case of talk and text in an office supply firm. Embedded in the social constructionist tradition – "[I]n organizations, storytelling is the preferred sensemaking currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders" (p. 106) – Boje is unusual in being as interested in the way in which stories are enacted as in the content of the narrative; that is, for him, "storytelling is seen as performance and text" (p. 110). From this basis, Boje makes five predictions about storytelling in organisations which are then confirmed by his research:

- Attention will be given to collective negotiation amongst the numerous available interpretations;

- Completeness of the story will vary within the organisation and may be more abbreviated in some settings than in others;
- Understanding will be apparent of who can tell and who can be told the story;
- "Being a player in the storytelling organization is being skilled enough to manage the person-to-person interaction to get the story woven into the ongoing turn-by-turn dialogue using a broad set of behaviours" (p. 110); and
- Stories repeat in patterns over an extended period of time.

The focus on the enactment in this study highlights that "people told their stories in bits and pieces, with excessive interruptions of story starts, with people talking over each other to share story fragments, and many aborted storytelling attempts" (p. 113); in these circumstances, Richardson's (1987) confidence about the linearity of time in "natural narratives" may be misplaced. In contrast to the rehearsed promulgation of organisational myths (e.g. strategy presentations by the CE), we are here deep in the warp and weft of everyday iterations of once-performed behaviour. Boje concludes that organisational members "performed stories not only to make sense of their setting but to negotiate alternative interpretations and to accommodate new precedents for decision and action" (p. 124). Boje's argument here chimes with the second form of sensemaking, identified by Ford *et al*. (2008) and exemplified by academics such as Shotter (2008), which seeks to adopt a more poetic approach to social constructionism, one concerned with the "becoming" of selves through language and interactions with others.

The second paper by Beech (2000) reports on research in three organisations in the process of implementing cultural change to improve performance. He notes the unitary (in his terms "heroic") assumptions underpinning such programmes: "change will be in a unified direction driven by the leaders' vision" (p. 212); O'Connor (1995) also points to the heroic/quest connotations in the managerial use of "champion" and "journey" in her case study analysis. Beech suggests these assumptions ignore the "dynamic tension between the espoused culture and the experience of group members" (p. 212); O'Connor similarly highlights the implicit conflict of good (supporters) and evil (resisters). Overall, Beech finds evidence in his case studies for the four narrative styles developed by Jeffcut (1993) which also form the basis of a more elaborate classification in Gabriel (2000):

- Epic (quest) narrative which entails a hero successfully undergoing ordeals on a difficult journey;

- Romantic narrative where obstacles are overcome and a state of harmony is re-established;
- Tragic narrative in which flaws undermine the enterprise, obstacles prevail and conflict triumphs over harmony; and
- Ironic narrative where the quest fails, harmony is not achieved and the hero discovers that is how the world is.

Furthermore, he provides an example of the epic narrative of top management being re-told locally in ironic terms; as he observes: "management's intentions achieve their opposite" (p. 221). Although he does not connect the styles of narrative that he found with a particular way of organising (such as the framework that we introduced in Chapter 3), Beech does acknowledge that employees can shift narratives over time. However, he also suggests that "managers were more likely to express the heroic style rather than any other. In contrast, workers were more likely to express the tragic style" (p. 224).

Brown and Humphreys (2003) come to a similar conclusion and Gabriel (2000) also concurs with this point: "stories that become part of folklore … [treat] … the organization either in neutral or in negative terms" (p. 119). In addition, Beech found that "very few workers thought that their managers had common sense. This underscores the need to understand the sensemaking style of the other party, including the other party's role expectations and identity function. The aim would be to enable assessment of how to convey the meanings one intends … [F]or heroic managers, this is likely to be painful, as it requires them to exit the world of certainty, optimism and strong leadership" (p. 226). Perhaps, it also requires such managers not to become discouraged by the continuation of negative stories despite their best efforts at generating more positive organisational meanings (indeed, they may form an important "safety-valve" role in the organisation); like academics in the field of performance studies, it may also be that organisational researchers are temperamentally attuned to hearing "discursive forms of control that operate in a subtle … manner" and "discursive forms of opposition and contestation" (Gabriel, 2004: 25).

As Beech suggests, the argument that organisations are the products of discourse implies that interventions in and through discourse are central to the activities of leaders. In the literature to date, discourse analysis is usually presented as "ways of thinking about discourse…and ways of treating discourse as data" (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 3). There is disappointingly little practical discussion – even in excellent studies like that of Beech (2000) and Brown and Humphreys (2003) – of ways of intervening in discourse through discourse; the latter observe that

"meaningful advice, other than broad injunctions to be sensitive to issues of history and context, will prove extremely difficult to formulate" (p. 139). We shall draw briefly on three examples that do seem to offer insights into options for leaders.

One contribution in this area is by Hardy *et al*. (2000). They examine discourse as a strategic resource and postulate a nine component model in three overlapping "circuits" (p. 1235) and illustrate the framework with a case study. The first circuit involves individuals in creating discursive statements that introduce symbols, create narratives, and use metaphors to associate these statements with relationships and/or ways of behaving. The second circuit occurs when the author of these statements has the authority to voice them in the view of their intended recipients, and they have meaning and resonance for those recipients. The third circuit arises when the statements are accepted and generate changes in relationships and/or ways of behaving and also change the context within which further discourse will take place. Despite their inclusion of a case study, this framework remains more suggestive than tangible, albeit that Ng and De Cock (2002) utilise the approach in an organisational case study which makes extensive use of board minutes as texts which they suggest confer a "monopoly of meaning" (p. 28) as part of the third circuit. Similarly, the empirical study of Dawson and Buchanan (2005) concludes that narrative is a strategic resource such that "the story-telling skills associated with constructing a compelling and convincing account of events can be viewed as another power base" (p. 859).

Barrett *et al*. (1995) draw on a study of the implementation of quality improvement initiatives in the US navy to conclude that: "[I]t is through patterns of discourse that relational bonds are formed; that action and structure are created, transformed and maintained; and that values or beliefs are reinforced or challenged" (p. 367). Much writing on complexity theory also encourages leaders to look for patterns (e.g. Mintzberg & van der Heyden, 1999); there is also a clear connection in this notion of patterns to the argument around (re-)iteration and repetition contained in the previous chapter. Most importantly, perhaps, the mention of relational bonds suggests the emotional resonance of the patterns of discourse being deployed.

Shaw (2002), an organisational development practitioner again writing from a perspective rooted in organisational complexity theory, argues that "the activity of conversation itself is the key process through which forms of organizing are dynamically sustained and changed" (p. 10) and sees "*conversing as organizing*" (p. 11, italics in original). She

provides a series of examples of the implications of this stance for her practice, highlighting the importance of techniques such as "open-space technology" and "the art of dialogue".

This last contribution takes us back to the crucial role of the leader as sense-maker discussed in Section 2 (albeit recalling the caveats concerning the privileging of agency over institution that were raised therein). For us, this has at least two components derived from consideration of organisational discourse. Firstly, it involves leaders making sense of the patterns of discourse being used by stakeholders. This may mean analysing local text and talk relevant to the topic under discussion and assessing the extent to which the participants conform to or deviate from the typical patterns of discourse (including the differentiation and ambiguity that seem to be present). Secondly, it requires selection of a personal discourse by the leader that will assist those stakeholders in shaping collective sense given the patterns that are present. This selection will have a number of components, but perhaps the most crucial are the style and content of the personal discourse (although this is a distinction denied by Wood & Kroger, 2000). On this account, the leader could attempt to follow the three circuits of discourse as strategic resource mapped out by Hardy *et al.* (2000). The selected discourse of the leader will be chosen to influence that sensemaking in the direction of ways of behaving and relationships that stimulate support for continuity or change; it will require the deliberate deployment of (re)-iteration and repetition. Importantly, the analysis of talk and text will need to establish the emotional tenor as well as the rational content.

Furthermore, the putative leader has access to another intervention in the design of the opportunities for discourse. This manipulation of context – both intellectual and material – is important; "discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into consideration" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 277). This manipulation may have many aspects: the setting of local discussion within a specific context; the active promotion of the value accorded to distinct stakeholder perspectives; the use of non-verbal techniques for exploring issues so that traditional discourses are undermined etc. (again, this picks up some of the key issues from our con-sideration of dramaturgy in earlier chapters in this section). However, the organisational discourse research literature also sounds some cautionary notes in this regard. For example, Gordon and Grant (2000) reporting their research on a stakeholder event demonstrated that participants appeared outwardly to embrace the change

initiative under discussion; deeper analysis of the language they employed, however, showed that they were unable to make the desired leap to a new and unfamiliar discourse.

There are a very limited number of other relevant empirical studies derived from this academic area that discuss the impact of leaders, and most of these focus on charismatic leadership. The first of these (Shamir *et al.*, 1994) explores the extent to which a speech of erstwhile US presidential candidate Jesse Jackson fulfils the predictions about the contents of charismatic leaders' speeches that are derived from their account of this variety of leadership. They find confirmation of all seven of these predictions (all of which have a significant emotional dimension and sound most characteristic of an enclave):

- More references to collective history and continuity between past and present;
- More references to collective identity;
- More positive references to followers' worth and efficacy as individuals and as a collective;
- More references to the leaders' similarity with followers;
- More references to values and fewer references to tangible outcomes; and
- More references to distant goals and fewer references to close goals; and
- More references to hope and faith.

Building on this work, Den Hartog and Verburg (1997) look at the relationship between rhetoric and charisma through case studies of three international business leaders. Their work focuses on frame alignment where leaders communicate a vision by "placing the vision in a certain context, interpreting reality for listeners and giving meaning to events" (p. 360). Their discussion of enactment has been considered in previous chapters in this section; here it is only important to note that charisma and oratory are closely aligned so that eloquence becomes "[F]irst, the ability to adapt the level of language to the audience. Second, rhetorical devices related to sound such as repetition, rhythm and alliteration. Third, charismatic leaders' powerful use of figurative language" (p. 323). Overall, they conclude that the three leaders deploy similar rhetorical devices (e.g. metaphors, contrasts, three-part lists, puzzles and alliteration) to convey their different orientations to doing business across borders. They do not have any data, however, on how effective these devices were in creating vision, inter-

preting reality and giving meaning to events (although studies which do explore these aspects are discussed when we consider the creation and responses of audiences in the next chapter).

Papers by Gardner and Alvolio (1998) and Harvey (2001) also explore the elements of performance exhibited by charismatic leaders; that is, the norms to which they should appeal in seeking the attribution of "charisma". The more recent of the two poses three relevant dilemmas for leaders aspiring to charismatic status:

- "how to successfully align themselves with their followers through appeals to shared history, values, and community … while at the same time representing themselves as different from followers";
- "offsetting the personalized concerns of self-promotion with the more socialized concerns of organizational promotion"; and
- "balancing positive and negative attributions to various characters in the charismatic environment" (Harvey, 2001: 253–254).

The charismatic paradigm of leadership has rather fallen out of fashion since the turn of the 21st century. Perhaps the most significant blow was struck by Collins (2001) who concluded from his study of companies with sustained outstanding performance over a number of years: "we were surprised, shocked really, to discover the type of leadership required for turning a good company into a great one. Compared to high-profile leaders with big personalities who make headlines and become celebrities, the good-to-great leaders seem … self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy – these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (pp. 12–13). Of course, this conclusion does not mean that these so-called "level 5" leaders were not telling stories but rather that the manner in which they were told would differ from the style adopted by those within the charismatic camp.

Narrative and performing leadership

There is clearly a widely held belief amongst writers on organisations that narratives are as important there as they are in our wider lives, although the evidence on the extent of that impact – and the way it is best generated in which institutional settings – is less forthcoming. Certainly, there are characteristics of good fiction – those relating to plot, genre, verisimilitude etc. – that seem to be just as relevant to the narratives that may be performed by leaders. The emphasis on myths

in the literature does serve to put the leader centre-stage and assumes that the culture of organisations can be manipulated by them in relatively predictable ways; this may be an unwise assumption as many employees may privilege other interpretations of the story than those intended by the leader (such that a quest in the mouth of the chief executive can become a farce in the mouth of a front-line professional). In addition, these employees may be more concerned with apparently mundane but no less emotionally charged, organisational narratives, such as whether or not the chief executive can keep them all in work. The next chapter explores in more detail the role of the audience on the impact of a story.

Furthermore, the theory and research derived from organisational discourse does view it as a strategic resource and does offer some accounts of the ways in which it might be deployed to impact upon organisational sensemaking in the service of stasis or change, albeit that these are often set within charismatic accounts of leadership which are now rather discredited perhaps precisely because they are not underpinned by robust empirical support. Indeed, there may be rather more evidence for the effectiveness of leaders possessing humility rather than self-regard – very different emotional tenors – in the stories that they tell and the ways in which they tell them; in other words, the response of the audience really matters. This insight now takes us into Chapter 8.

8
Is Anybody There? The Nature of Audiences

Introduction

In Chapter 3 we noted that without subordinates and/or followers the suggestion of an individual being an organisational leader is implausible. In Chapter 4 we argued that leadership could be conceptualised in terms of two sorts of performance, for which the framework of narrative, enactment and audience is relevant to both. For leaders in organisations, the audiences for these performances will commonly include subordinates as well as superordinates and peers and one characteristic of excellent leaders may be their ability to attract followership from these internal colleagues and external contacts. In this chapter we look at some of the important theories and research on audiences from four fields that might inform our understanding of leaders' approach to their audiences: cultural studies' consideration of the influence of TV and film; accounts from marketing on the impact of advertising; contributions from performances studies, and, finally, political scientists' formulation of the ways audiences respond to politicians. Necessarily this chapter can only summarise those aspects of these fields that seem most pertinent to our interest in the performance of leadership.

Before moving into these separate areas, however, there are some overarching conceptual issues that recur through a number of these bodies of literature. These are summarised by Barker (2006) as "unarguable, certain truths about audiences" (p. 24):

1. "There is no such thing as the 'the audience', rather, there are a great variety of 'audiences' that nonetheless display patterns and processes which bind them into researchable communities of response.

2. Being an audience for anything is never a simple or singular process. It is a process that begins *in advance* of the actual encounter … audiences bring their social and personal histories with them …
3. Audiences are communal, in complicated senses; people not only perform a lot of their audiencing in groups, they also carry with them a sense of belonging to different discursive communities – some real, some imaginary, even as they may watch, listen and read alone.
4. Audiences make their own 'wholes' … people select and construct a sense of the 'whole' to which they are responding, by bringing to bear relevant criteria that encourage them to pay attention to some parts and treat others as 'givens' or irrelevant.
5. Being an audience is *ordinary*, something that people commonly do as routine …
6. … there are more committed, devotional engagements – the moments when being in an audience *matters deeply* to people …
7. …
8. …
9. Audience responses are always *emotionally charged understandings* and *educated emotions*. That is to say, there is no way of separating out the cognitive and the emotional responses …
10. What we choose to engage in as audiences … is part of how we conceive of ourselves …" (edited from Barker, 2006, pp. 125–126, italics in original).

There are some themes here familiar from Section 2. The death of both the author and the meta-narrative – that is, the implausibility of the notion of one message, one audience, one interpretation – seem to have had profound implications for all areas of audience research. At the same time, whilst individuals may bring their own patterns of personal sensemaking with them to their audience experiences, they do so as members of discernible communities of response (or interpretive communities). The existence of these communities speaks once again to the importance of social structure in shaping the responses of agents. Furthermore, adopting membership of these communities is one of the ways in which these agents perform their sense of "self". Of course, as Barker notes, there are some significant research challenges lurking in these truths. One of the major ones that he identifies is the ambition to "*make the concept of an interpretive community empirically measurable*" (p. 129, italics in original).

Of course, a number of interpretive communities have been postulated over the years, often based on such factors as race, gender, sexuality etc. Given our interest in this topic in Chapter 4, let us turn briefly again to gender. Recent papers (e.g. Grabe & Kamhawi, 2006; Knobloch-Westerwick & Alter, 2007) have each presented research that suggests gendered responses to news items. The first study concluded that: "male viewers are associated with a negativity bias reporting the highest arousal levels and producing the best recognition memory and comprehension scores for negatively valenced messages" (p. 346). In contrast, women processed the content of positive stories more effectively. The authors adopt, at least in part, an evolutionary psychology framework (see Plotkin, 1997) to explain these findings, arguing that this gender disparity has "biologically adaptive functions" (p. 365). The second study found that "women favour social/interpersonal topics and men prefer achievement/performance issues" (p. 739), albeit that the authors contend that "biological sex does not appear to be the sole cause of for sex-typed news preferences" (p. 752) and argue that the social environment both creates and rewards these gender differences. Most commentators (e.g. Morley, 2006) favour this second interpretation whilst remaining sceptical of generalised and essentialist notions of audience based on these very broad categories of affiliation.

One of the explanations of the gender difference offered by Knobloch-Westerwick and Alter (2007) relates to women being "less attentive to and thus being less informed about professional and competitive life domains" (p. 753). This appears to be a contemporary example of the "knowledge gap hypothesis" which posits "increasing differences in knowledge due to social structure-based inequities" (Viswanath & Finnegan, 1996: 187). This longstanding hypothesis is contentious, not least in apparently focusing on a diffusion model where the values and priorities that constitute knowledge are assumed to flow from those with more power to those with less power, but it has drawn attention to the structural and institutional – as opposed to personal – factors that may shape the responsiveness of audiences. Such studies did not cease with Viswanath and Finnegan (1996). Before her recent study of gender differences, Grabe and her colleagues (2000) had examined the impact of educational background on the "knowledge gap" and concluded: "participants from higher and lower educational backgrounds paid equal levels of attention to television news stories, but they did not display the same recognition memory for facts" (p. 3); however, "these findings do not pinpoint whether cognitive access is learned or innate" (p. 3).

Whatever the stance adopted on causation here, it is apparent that leaders need to possess sensitivity to the potential patterns of response that may be demonstrated by distinct communities of interest within an audience that shape – and are in turn shaped by – the reactions of individuals. The importance of possessing such sensitivity may in part lie behind the argument that leadership generally perceived as efficacious is frequently sector-specific, albeit that we might want to recast this characteristic as being, more precisely, an awareness of the preferred ways of organising that are reflected in the responses of communities of interest within any sector.

Cultural studies, TV and film

The "canonic" (Gurevitch & Scannell, 2003) paper in this area was given by Hall in 1973: "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse". His account focuses on the "communicative exchange" (p. 2) between broadcaster and audience. The former has to encode a meaningful discourse for the audience from within "their institutional structures and networks of production, their organized routines and technical infrastructures … [drawing] topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, image of the audience, 'definitions of the situation' from the wider socio-cultural and political system" (pp. 2–3, quotation marks in original, parentheses added). This he terms meaning-structure 1. The latter then decodes the message according to its own frameworks of knowledge, structures of production and technical infrastructure; this constitutes meaning-structure 2. This means that television texts, for example, are polysemic, where "polysemy … conveys the idea of diversity of meanings, as well as encompassing the notion of the text working to delimit the potential readings" (Roscoe *et al.*, 1995). Hall agues that "the degrees of 'understanding' and 'misunderstanding' in this communicative exchange depend <u>both</u> on the degree of symmetry/a-symmetry between the position of encoder-producer and that of the decoder-receiver: and <u>also</u> the degrees of identity/non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit, interrupt or systematically distort what has been transmitted" (p. 4, quotation marks and emphases in original).

These codes include "the 'maps of meaning' into which any culture is organized, and those 'maps of social reality' have the whole range of social meanings, practices usages, power and interest 'written in' to them" (p. 13). Hall identifies a number of such codes within which the audience can decode the encoded message: dominant code of the

broadcasting institution; professional code of the broadcasting journalist; negotiated code which reflects local circumstances and interpretations; and the oppositional code where there is suspicion of the interests being served by the message. The presence of these codes means that "misunderstandings" are inevitable, in particular, he suggests, disjunctures between dominant encodings and negotiated decodings will occur. Morley (1980), cited in Michelle (2007), summarises this point as Hall seeking to identify: "how the different cultural and subcultural structures and formations within the audience, and the sharing of different cultural codes and competencies amongst different groups and classes, structure the decoding of the message for different sections of the audience" (p. 51). At the end of his paper, Hall stresses that, given this analysis, a simple attempt to "make communications more effective" "is to misread a deep-structure process for a surface phenomenon" (p. 19).

The concept of "symmetry/a-symmetry" is already familiar from our discussion of genre in Chapter 7 and need not delay us long here. Briefly, it relates to the rules "whereby stories of a certain recognizable type, content, and structure can be easily encoded" (Hall, 1973: 6). He uses the genre of Western films as his example of a form where, referring to varying sorts of Westerns made in the 1960s, the "'rules of encoding' were so diffused, so symmetrically shared as between producer and audience, that the 'message' was likely to be decoded in a manner highly symmetrical to that which it had been encoded" (p. 6, quotation marks in original). Working on this broad cultural canvas, Hall is not specific about how anyone could tell whether symmetry had been achieved and, indeed, what the implications of this achievement might be; perhaps the closer relationship between encoder (would-be leader) and decoder (potential follower) in and around organisations makes such judgements of symmetry and asymmetry easier to make. Looking back at Hall's paper 35 years on, the use of the Western also serves to exemplify that the meanings intended and received can vary significantly over time (as suggested by the recent trend for "revisionist" Westerns) as well as across cultures; this also reminds us of the potential for leadership to be seen as a dynamic temporal phenomenon.

The Hall model is clearly influenced by some of the intellectual ideas introduced earlier in this book, such as postmodernism and institutional theory (see Gurevitch & Scannell, 2003 for more discussion of these influences). They argue that Hall was overtly seeking to challenge the positivistic and empirical bias of much media studies up to that

date, in particular the uses and gratifications account within which "individuals selectively use mass media in order to satisfy their human needs" (Lull, 1980); Roscoe *et al.* (1995) in their critique of this approach emphasise both its presumption of autonomous agent choice and its focus on psychological needs. This rejection of an individualist approach chimes theoretically – if not quite temporally – with our discussion of the development of leadership theory in Chapter 2.

Hall's paper constituted a major contribution to the development of cultural and media studies which we do not have time to explore here. Rather, we want to focus on one recent paper (Michelle, 2007) that seeks to build on previous work to establish a conceptual framework for audience responses to TV and film; its point of departure is, unsurprisingly, the paper by Hall (albeit in its revised 1980 version) which, Michelle argues, "fails to capture the full complexity of audience reception" (p. 183).

Michelle (2007) identifies three foci of earlier research. The first is the relationship between audience reception and the social and demographic characteristics of the audience; she notes that studies here have looked at categories as broad as social class and as narrow as experience of male violence. The second examines "the nature of the encounter between 'foreign' cultural texts and local audiences" (p. 185). Both of these approaches assume an active audience, and also that audience responses reflect the "particularities of their demographic, and social group membership(s), political and moral beliefs and interests, social and cultural identities and locations, and individual psychological make-ups" (p. 185).

The third approach relies less on this assumption and argues that the originators of TV and film do significantly shape the meanings that audiences will take; it examines "how media frames determined at the point of textual encoding work to 'set the agenda' for audience interpretation and response" (p. 186). This last line of argument suggests that the extent of polysemy may be exaggerated as "most texts have meanings which are perfectly clear to the majority of their readers" (Morley, 2006: 110). There is some evidence to support this position in the literature. For instance, Kim and McComb (2007) conclude from their study of the influence of newspaper content on readers' views of political candidates: "the attributes positively and negatively covered in media will be perceived in similar fashion by the public" (p. 310); surprisingly, there is no discussion of the possibility of the influence flowing in the other direction (i.e. the predominant opinions of the readership shape the position adopted by the media). It is also worthwhile noting that "the vast majority of attributes cited in the survey

Figure 8.1 Composite multi-dimensional model of audience reception

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">DENOTATIVE LEVEL OF MEANING</td></tr>
<tr>
<td><u>Transparent Mode:</u>
Text as life
• Non-fiction texts: perceived as a “mirror” of reality
• Fiction texts: “suspension of disbelief”
• Ideological/discursive content is implicitly read “straight” dominant/preferred decoding</td>
<td><u>Referential Mode:</u>
Text as like life
Comparative sources potentially drawn on:
i) Personal experience/individual biography
ii) Immediate life world experience
iii) Experience and knowledge of the wider social/political/economic/cultural/national/international context of production or reception</td>
<td><u>Mediated Mode:</u>
Text as a production
Heightened attunement to:
i) Textual aesthetics
ii) Generic form
iii) Intentionality
* Textual
* Generic
* Professional/ Industry-based</td>
</tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">CONNOTATIVE LEVEL OF MEANING</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3"><u>Discursive Mode:</u> Text as a message

i) Analytical (Comprehension of message)
* Identification
* Motivation
* Implication

ii) Positional (Response to that message)
Dominant/Preferred Negotiated Oppositional</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">EVALUATION</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hegemonic Reading</td><td>Contesting Reading</td><td>Counter-Hegemonic Reading</td></tr>
</table>

(reproduced from Michelle, 2007: 194)

respondents’ descriptions of the candidates pertained to personal qualifications and character” (p. 310).

Michelle’s resultant model, reproduced in Figure 8.1, is based upon four modes of reception:

- **Transparent** – *text as life* – where the audience accepts, perhaps actively accepts, the given interpretation of what is seen or heard as reflecting “real life”.

- **Referential** – *text as like life* – where the audience perceive the product as standing alongside the "real world" and where it may "affirm, contest, or question the accuracy of textual depictions of people and events and the version of 'reality' presented" (p. 199, quotation marks in original).
- **Mediated** – *text as a production* – where the audience recognises "the constructed nature of the text as a media *production*" (p. 203) such that its engagement with the message may be interrupted; this recognition might be aesthetic (assessing the plot, editing etc. of that specific text), generic (drawing on familiarity with the genre) or related to perceptions of producers' intentions and motivations in developing the product's form in particular ways.
- **Discursive** – *text as a message* – where the audience focuses on the producers' message; its response can be analytical (identify and critique the motivation or implication of the explicit message) or positional (articulate the interpretation and acceptance or rejection of the message).

For this last – positional – response, Michelle (2007) goes back to three of Hall's codes – dominant, negotiated and oppositional – where the audience can accept all, some or none of the producers' message. She suggests establishing the position of the audience allows an evaluation of the overall response to be deduced (although it is not clear how this might be done ahead of analysing the response, something which, of course, may be plausible in organisations where there is typically an ongoing relationship between producer and audience). Finally, Michelle (2007) draws attention to the importance of the relationship between text and viewer where closeness is subjective and textually driven and distance is objective and critically driven (and there is an established strand in the leadership literature that discusses aspects of close and distant leadership e.g. Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001).

Michelle is not arguing that all audience responses will fit neatly into any of these categories although she does suggest that one or two will probably predominate in each case. Further, she wants to see research which explores whether "particular social groups, with access to particular forms of social capital, are predisposed to adopt particular forms of reception" (p. 216); thus, ideas of interpretive communities and inequities in possession of knowledge re-appear. In these circumstances, the prospect, in an organisational setting, of deploying the NDIT categories of ways of organising as one method of determining interpretive

communities – and establishing their approaches to the construction of knowledge – may hold considerable promise for leaders.

Overall, we suggest that this framework provides one schema through which an organisational leader may explore the audience responses to his/her performances over time. In so doing, the leader's attention is drawn to the potential patterning in the range of these responses; s/he is also encouraged both to look for explanations of "misunderstanding" that go well beyond apparent failures in conveying the message and to consider the "distance" between the encoder and the decoder that might shape, at least in part, those responses.

Marketing and advertising

Where to start within this vast terrain? For our purposes, and significantly over-simplifying a vast range of theoretical and methodological approaches, we can identify two broad categories: the description of individuals' responses to advertising; and the analysis of the social structures within which advertising is created and received. Both categories contain insights on which organisational leaders might draw; to some extent they also mirror the agent/structure distinction that has recurred through this text.

Much of the discussion in the first category is concerned with the factors in an advertising campaign that make consumers buy a product. Gordon (2006) summarises the frameworks derived from behaviourist theory, such as AIDA (attention, interest, desire, acquisition), and notes their longevity. Ang *et al.* (2007) demonstrate this latter point by drawing on previous work to conceptualise and test an account of creativity in advertising that consists of three dimensions: novelty (arousal), meaningfulness (relevance to the product) and connectedness (relevance to the audience). There is a strong emphasis in this model – and those which precede it – on the emotional aspects of audience response. In reviewing the literature, Gordon (2006) thus focuses on the emotions of consumers in responding to advertising. She cites a study by Biel in 1990 which concluded that "the likeability of a commercial was the best predictor of audience response" (p. 3), where two of Ang's dimensions feature in the five characteristics of "likeability": ingenuity; meaningful; energy; warmth; and "does not rub the wrong way – not worn out, not phony, not irritating" (Gordon, 2006: 3). She concludes that "effective advertising is that which is personally meaningful, culturally relevant, and creates a subjective feeling of warmth and positive affect" (p. 4). The messages from these studies

are not that different from those available in the more thoughtful books on presentation skills (e.g. Siddons, 2008) so we will not pursue them further here.

Situated within another strand of this same literature, Wang (2006) focuses less on audience emotion than on audience knowledge, arguing that objective knowledge – what an individual knows that they know – and subjective knowledge – the degree of confidence that an individual has in his/her knowledge – shape their responses. Arguably, this paper represents another variation on the "knowledge gap hypothesis"; "[D]epending on different levels of knowledge that audiences possess, advertisers might need to respond differently to audiences" (p. 282). This study also reflects the linked concern of many writers with the information processing capacity of individuals, the factors that shape it and the implications of that shaping (e.g. Hallahan, 2000a); Lang (2000) outlines the two major assumptions of this field, "[F]irst, people are information processors … Second, a person's ability to process information is limited" (p. 47). We do not have the space to explore this topic here, but it would be remiss not to acknowledge its ongoing importance in the debate. To return to Wang (2006), the key finding from that study is that high objective knowledge has a detrimental effect on respondents' intention to purchase; this research suggests apparent corroboration for the proposed mediating effect of objectivity in Michelle's framework (see Figure 8.1).

Drawing extensively on the sociological and anthropological traditions that we have discussed in Section 2, Deighton (1992) is our chosen route into the second category of literature drawn from marketing and advertising. He adopts a performative frame for his consideration of advertising, arguing that whilst audiences may choose products, they consume the performance of advertising. His paper identifies four sorts of performance to demonstrate the breadth of the use of the term, in a manner not dissimilar to our analysis already set out in previous chapters in this section; consumers attend performances, consumers participate in performances, consumers perform with products and products perform for consumers (in the sense of being effective technology for the service they were purchased to perform). Interestingly, he suggests that events are either occurrences or performances, where the latter are based in some form of actual or perceived obligation that is not present in the former; he illustrates an occurrence by reference to the 1989 San Francisco earthquake and contrasts it with the World Series baseball match – "a true performance" (p. 363) – that it interrupted on US TV.

In developing his argument about consumers and performance, Deighton differentiates three sorts of performance: contractual performance, where the product does what it is supposed to do; enacted performance, where meeting the obligation of the product requires a performance by a person, either producer or consumer; and, dramatistic performance, where the enactment occurs with the intention of being observed (in Goffman, 1979's terms, behaviours are mutually monitored by performer and audience). In each case, Deighton argues, the intention of advertising is to focus on the efficiency, effectiveness or efficacy of the product and/or the producer (thus motor mechanics, for instance, want to share the consumer attribution of effectiveness with their diagnostic technology) and to downplay the role of other factors (such as the contribution of the consumer, context, etc.); the resonance here with the published accounts of many celebrity organisational leaders scarcely needs pointing out (see Gladwell, 2008 for a discussion of the tendency of accounts of successful leaders to focus on individual rather than contextual factors). Nonetheless, Deighton suggests, consumers play an active – and explicitly social – role in the performance of both advertising and its products, even when advertisers may wish to disguise the nature of the dramatistic performance. Furthermore, and in common with most of the audience literature, he concludes that audiences must construct their own version of the performances in which they have participated.

This focus on the social dimensions of advertising, for example, on how products are used and on the ways in which advertising is interpreted by audiences, is in contrast to "the emphasis on the solitary subject" (Ritson & Elliott, 1999: 260) inherent in much advertising theory. Ritson and Elliott (1999) explored the active social role of consumers in a "study of advertising's contribution to the everyday interactions of adolescent informants at a number of English high schools" (p. 260). They found that advertising-based discourse played a significant part in these interactions, not only in episodes of simple quotation and mimicry but also in contributing to social hierarchies (through the students' demonstration of knowledge/power in interpretation/acceptance of meaning), defining social position (by students responding negatively or positively to ascribed meanings) and creating new or subverting established social rituals (and Otnes & Scott, 2006, explore in depth the interaction between advertising and social ritual).

The very particular setting within which this research took place may have had some influence on the apparent volubility of the interaction; however, Alperstein (1990) had earlier described and

interpreted "the verbal content of television advertising as it circulates in everyday life" (p. 15), in his case in a small town in the USA. He found that his informants: invariably transform adverts' contents for their own purposes; derive meaning from their own interpretations and then re-integrate that meaning into their interactions; use advert content to sustain social relationships and, in some cases, to confirm social roles; express emotion; and express disassociation from specific cultural or social values. This study is not without flaws, for example, while it recorded the variety of verbal contents it did not reveal their frequency of usage; nonetheless the two studies taken together do provide compelling evidence for the importance of considering the social factors that may underpin audience reaction.

Given that the "schools" of theorising and researching in advertising and marketing categorised above have been influenced by the same cultural commentators as writers on TV and film – and the two fields have clearly interacted with each other (see Lull, 1980, for a study of the social uses of television for an example) – it is no surprise that some of the implications for organisational leadership may appear similar. However, and to focus only on the second category of literature, the range of interpretations – and in particular the functions that these interpretations can play – within an active social audience gives even more depth of understanding to the manner in which messages may be deconstructed and reconstructed by the disparate communities of interest that constitute audiences. Furthermore, the schools and the small town examined in these two case study papers have much more in common with organisations – at least in terms of the continuity of relationship between members of the audience – than most research in the encoder/decoder tradition and thus alert us to the particular salience of their conclusions for leaders and leadership studies.

There is a further issue of organisational interest in this literature which has potential resonance for organisational leaders: how to reach inactive publics (and turn them into audiences). These "publics" could be internal – specific groups of employees – or, more likely, external, such as unengaged stakeholders. Furthermore, as Hallahan (2000b) notes, this inactivity – little knowledge and little involvement – could be an act of commission not omission (i.e. stakeholders have made a decision to be inactive in relation to a particular organisation). As he also observes: "organizations often have greater incentives to establish and maintain a relationship with and extract favourable outcomes with potential customers, investors, donors, employees, or voters than do the publics with whom they are trying to establish and maintain

a relationship" (p. 509). Unfortunately, the two suggested responses of organizations to these inactive publics are rather disappointing: "enhance motivation and ability to process" (that is, increase involvement and knowledge); and "create opportunities to communicate" (p. 510).

Perhaps more usefully – and again drawing on the work on Hallahan (1999) which suggests that storytelling is the most complex form of framing and links back to the ideas introduced in Section 2 – Lundy (2006) concludes that her study of the effectiveness of internal communication reveals: "the need for public relations practitioners to understand the needs and motivations of internal audiences and to contextualise internal messages for increased effectiveness in persuasion" (p. 295). Nonetheless, she is clear that her results show "there is great potential for persuading internal audiences regarding organizational initiatives. The use of message frames can play a significant role in this process" (p. 300).

Performance studies

In a chapter on audiences in a book about performing leadership, it may seem odd to come to the specific texts from the field of performance (for which read theatre) studies relatively late in the day (albeit that we have drawn on these texts – especially Schechner (2003) – earlier in the text). There are three reasons for this approach, all articulated by Balme (2008).

Firstly, he notes that: "all the different interpretive strategies elaborated by the humanities to study texts, images and musical scores can and have been applied to theatre as well" (p. 34). Sitting squarely in the "intellectual tradition" (p. 34) of the social sciences, the presence of Hall and ideas such as interpretive communities loom large. The second reason is that performance studies has largely not engaged with the question of the audience and thus does not have much to say on the subject which is particularly original. Thirdly, whilst typically insisting that audiences make a significant impact on live performances, the discipline has rarely undertaken any empirical research on the ways in which this impact is generated and received.

In common with Schechner (2003) and other writers on performance studies (e.g. Nicholson, 2005), Bennett (1997) is interested in the power of performance to provoke social change. Drawing on the work of Brecht (e.g. 1997), she explores the attempts of a number of dramatists to "re-activate stage-audience exchange" (p. 21). These ideas of

re-energising audience participation in theatrical events in the service of change, often buttressed by theory drawn from the psychodynamic tradition, have transferred across into to some of the more recent texts on organisational development and their promotion of temporary institutions such as "open space" events and corporate away-days (see Peck & 6, 2006, for further discussion). Whilst space precludes us from exploring them in depth here, there are clearly opportunities for leaders to use such techniques to shape the sensemaking of organisational members.

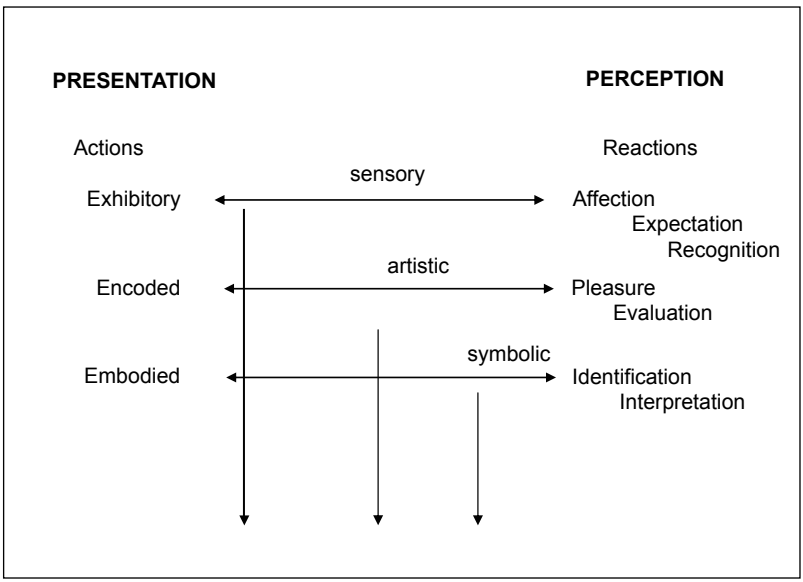
Bennett (1997) deploys her conceptualisation of the "inner frame" and "outer frame" to explore the experiences of theatre audiences. The former "contains the event itself and, in particular, the spectator's experience of a fictional stage world" (p. 2). The latter "is concerned with theatre as a cultural construct through the idea of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience's definitions and expectations of a performance" (p. 1). The emphasis on understanding the cultural construction – or broader context – of performance within theatre studies contrasts markedly with the approach in most texts on leadership; whilst the frameworks for theorising context may be different to our approach (rooted as it is in NDIT), the importance of establishing a theoretical basis for talking about it is widely recognised.

Sauter (2000) sets out what is probably an even more useful framework in his book "The Theatrical Event" (Figure 8.2); the title is important in that it demonstrates his focus on the typically single interaction between theatre performers and theatre audiences which is one of the obvious misanalogies with organisational leaders and organisational audiences. Nonetheless, with this limitation acknowledged, the framework does highlight important aspects of this interaction that we might otherwise overlook.

On the sensory level, the interaction is conceived as a personal relationship between performer and spectator, where the latter responds more or less spontaneously to the exhibitory actions of the former both emotionally and cognitively (e.g. affection, expectation, recognition etc.). Sauter (2000) finds it "necessary to stress the sensory communication again and again, because it is of utmost importance for all other communicative processes" (p. 8).

On the artistic level, the performers' actions are presented within the mutual expectations of the relevant genre, style or skills; "within each genre there exist a number of more or less distinct styles … these features of genre and style can be presented with the varying skills of and

Figure 8.2 Sauter's framework of interaction between performance and perception



(Based on Sauter, 2000)

personal manners of the individual performer" (Sauter, 2000: 8). Of course, the audience member has to possess some knowledge of genre, style and skill in order to respond to the performer at more than just a sensory level; if this is present, then this represents an aesthetic judgement based on an evaluation against some pre-conceived expectations.

The symbolic communication "is a consequence of the artistic otherness of the event: meaning can be attributed to the artistic actions" (Sauter, 2000: 7). He is keen to stress, however, that the "fictional character is created by the performer and the spectator together. There is no Hamlet on stage: he is only in the mind of the spectator, aided through the images presented by the performer" (p. 9).

In order to head-off any challenge that this account is overly ideational or individualistic, Sauter (2000) also nests Figure 8.2 within five "contexts" which can be seen as a further elaboration of the frames of Bennett (1997):

- "the *conventional* context, indicating the traditions and features of a theatre world in a certain place and a certain time;

- the *structural* context, describing the organization of theatre in a society (subsidies, locations, legal frames etc.);
- and the *conceptual* context, reflecting the ideology which society expresses in relation to theatre, such as the functions of theatre as a means of entertainment, propaganda, or education …
- … the *cultural* context marks the interdependence of theatre and other art forms..
- … the *life world*, a word describing a vast range of things that we might consider important for a theatrical event" (pp. 9–10, italics in original, bullets added).

It may be that the most distinctive contribution of performance studies to our area of interest lies in its drawing our attention to the potential aesthetic appeal of performers and performances. If appeals to the emotions of audiences play a central role in the shaping of sensemaking by leaders, then it is plausible that at least part of this emotional impact is derived from the leader exhibiting the characteristics of efficient, effective or efficacious leadership held by the organisational audience. As suggested by Sauter (2000), one component of the appeal of any theatrical performance may be rooted in a emotional response to the actor(s): "if a spectator does not like the actors, the performance becomes meaningless" (p. 4). He cites evidence to suggest that the "most frequent emotions in the theatre are pleasure, sympathy, empathy and identification" (p. 58).

This aesthetic dimension of performance focuses us on the aspects of leadership that are perceived as desirable – or beautiful which, as Ladkin (2006) suggests, is the most commonly known aesthetic category (although it is a label which we are perhaps reluctant to use here for that reason) – within a particular community of interest at a specific period of time. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) identify four aspects of "felt meaning" in aesthetic experience – perceptual, emotional, intellectual and communicative – all of which chime with the types of frameworks laid out in this section. This consideration of the aesthetic dimension gives us an alternative perspective on the characteristics of leaders – consideration, stimulation, integrity – catalogued in the leadership quality frameworks that are rooted in transformational models of leadership and, as we suggested in Chapter 2, are aspirational, if not even fanciful. However, when viewed as the aesthetic attributes that followers wish to bestow on their leaders in the process of granting them authority, they give us an important insight into the nature of the emotional performances that leaders may need

to give. As a consequence, these frameworks do not necessarily deny the relevance of other sources of authority – such as positional power or network centrality – but rather suggest that it may be unwise for a leader to foreground them in his or her performances for followers. As French and Raven (1959) demonstrate, where leaders have relatively less positional power the aesthetic dimension of a leader's bearing can be particularly important. Further, and as we argued earlier in this book, the attributes deemed desirable by followers may differ between divergent ways of organising.

Finally, Sauter's (2000) analysis also suggests another two potentially fruitful, if not uncontroversial, lines of argument. Firstly, if Hamlet – whether a good Hamlet or a poor Hamlet – is only present in the mind of the spectator, then perhaps so is a leader. An actor claiming to be a great Hamlet could be seen to analogous to a manager, professional or sportsperson claiming to be a great leader; the plausibility of this claim lies entirely in the response of the audience. We shall return to this thought at the end of this chapter. Secondly, theatrical performance is typically a collective activity where a number of individuals collaborate (and we are reminded of the emphasis in Goffman, 1959, on the teamwork frequently involved in impression management). However, there is virtually nothing in the leadership literature that considers collective leadership from either a theoretical or empirical standpoint (and even this current text focuses on the relational aspects of individual leadership); this is a significant omission.

Political science: applause and booing

One of the questions explored by Sauter (2000) is in what ways speeches by politicians can be seen as theatrical events: "if one uses the description of theatricality as the intersection of presentation and perception … then what does such a point of view say about political speeches?" (p. 66). Building on a study of public speeches by Swedish politicians, he readily concludes that there are elements that bear a resemblance to the sensory and artistic levels of communication whereas he is more tentative in claiming symbolic interaction; whilst he can see potential symbolic dimensions to the reported communications, he has no immediate evidence that such interpretations have been made by the audience.

Much of the discussion here links closely to that on charisma and rhetoric in the previous chapter; the justification for including a study here rather than there is it focuses more on the audience than the performer. Furthermore, and in contrast to the fields discussed above, it

again draws us back to the immediacy and importance of the ongoing relationship between leaders and audiences that are generally less emphasised in cultural, advertising and performance studies. In this setting, they are typically part of the same organisation or networks of organisations with a set of personal relationships (of more or less distance) which develop over extended periods of time (whereas the three areas discussed above tend to focus on impersonal interactions conducted within a relatively short timeframe). Furthermore, leaders take decisions that commit their organisations – including their employees and partners – to courses of action; they do so to the extent that they can claim sufficient authority with followers to secure this commitment. Any performance by a leader is given in the very particular context of those relationships and in pursuit of an often quite specific commitment. Studies of political audiences – and in particular those receiving performances intended to secure or bolster commitment to party and/or policy – are clearly very relevant here.

One of the most influential papers in this field was published by Heritage and Greatbatch in 1986. Building on the earlier work of Atkinson (e.g. 1984) – but influenced also by the work of Goffman and others on turn-taking described in Chapter 5 – they analysed the response of audiences to almost 500 speeches at UK party conferences to identify which rhetorical forms generated applause. They found that around 70% of the applause was associated with seven rhetorical formats:

- *Contrast* – thesis and antithesis;
- *List* – typically, the three item list where the final item is preceded by "and";
- *Puzzle and solution* – pose problem and provide answer;
- *Headline and punchline* – propose an announcement, and then make it;
- *Combination* – using any of the above together;
- *Position taking* – adopting a clear stance on an issue; and
- *Pursuit* – repeating or recasting a point to generate applause where it has been absent first time around.

The feature that all of these formats have in common, with the potential exception of the last one where the initial formulation has failed to prompt the expected respond, is that they enable the audience to predict the moment at which applause will be appropriate. Heritage and Greatbatch (1986), again reflecting the arguments of Atkinson,

suggest that, whilst rhetorical structure is important, so is an emphasis on "the role of intonation, timing and gesture in the delivery of political messages" (p. 143). They found a strong correlation between what they term "stress" – gaze, higher volume, pitch variation, rhythmic shift and/or gesture – and the presence of applause; Bull (1986) discusses the centrality of hand gestures to the manner in which Arthur Scargill prompts and curtails audience applause in one of his speeches.

There are several reasonable challenges that could be raised in relation to the very particular setting of this study. The most significant, and one anticipated by the authors, is that it was the content of the speeches that had the most impact on the audiences' inclination to applaud; on analysis, they found that "*both* pro-majority and pro-minority applauded statements contained higher proportions of rhetorical formats" (p. 146). Furthermore, even statements reflecting a popular party position were less likely to be applauded if they were not accompanied by some form of rhetorical device. As they note: "[T]he conclusions of this paper may be viewed as discomforting by those who understand political debate as an activity in which speakers seek to persuade, and audiences are influenced, by processes of rational argument" (p. 150).

However, as Bull (2006) observes, almost one third of applause was not consequent on these seven rhetorical formats. Further they focus on synchronous applause (i.e. anticipated by the speaker and thus not simultaneous with his/her speech) without considering asynchronous or isolated (as opposed to collective) applause. In his own, albeit much smaller, studies (e.g. 1990), Bull found that content played more of role in applause and, consistently, it was more asynchronous (indeed, representing almost half of all applause) than suggested by Atkinson and Heritage and Greatbatch. In another study – of stand-up comedians – Wells and Bull (2007) identified the use of direct questions to the audience as an additional device for creating affiliation. From this study, he and his co-author suggest that "isolated audience responses are a natural feature of stand-up comedy ... stigma associated with being a sole responder may simply not translate into the less formal ambience of a stand-up comedy performance" (p. 339).

Notwithstanding these reservations, whilst it may be rare for organisational leaders to speak in settings where they can assume the same strength of affiliation as that expressed by delegates to a party conference (except, perhaps, in a strongly enclaved organisation), there are clearly relevant messages for them in these findings that audiences respond strongly to rhetorical devices and vocal and non-vocal features as well as to content. Indeed, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) follow

Atkinson (1984) in suggesting that many of these rhetorical formats are commonplace in much text intended to persuade. Whilst leaders may not typically expect applause during a performance, they can assume that there are other forms of collective approbation (e.g. head nodding) which may occur; disappointingly, there is apparently no published research in the area.

Towards the end of their discussion, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) reflect on the benefits to audience members of these rhetorical devices. As these members have a preference for collective action, such devices provide them "with some degree of security that they will not find themselves clapping alone" (p. 152). Or, indeed, booing alone. In a study based on a variety of UK and US political settings, Clayman (1993) makes three observations about booing:

1. *A substantial time lag intervenes between the completion of the objectionable item and the onset of booing …*
2. *When booing is substantially delayed, some other audience response usually intervenes between the objectionable remark and the booing response …*
3. *When booing is not substantially delayed, some other audience behaviour usually occurs simultaneously with the speaker's talk before booing*' (pp. 116–117, italics in original).

Clayman (1993) found that "the onset of booing is often preceded by virtual or incipient displays of social disaffiliation … whispering or talking among themselves, talking, shouting, or jeering at the speaker … the resulting sound can be characterized as a 'murmur', 'buzz', or 'roar' … in many instances the initial buzzing dissolves into booing" (p. 117). He argues that this pre-booing behaviour forms a process of mutual monitoring where audience members establish whether "at least some of their fellows are predisposed to express disapproval" (p. 118). Of course, booing may be accompanied by heckling, but the latter is, on Clayman's account, "an individual rather than a collective response" (p. 119).

Llewellyn (2005) challenges this conclusion in his research on public meetings held by local authorities in London. Less stage-managed, he claims, than the political settings studied by Heritage and Greatbatch and Clayman, these are "relatively open forums where conflict can be generated through actions that are sequentially organized … audiences are more active in negotiating and shaping the character of public discourse as it is being produced" (p. 698). Whilst some rules were established – e.g. turn-taking, speaking through the chair – these were suspended for sections of the meeting to enable more direct interaction

between audience and speaker and it is these episodes that Llewellyn focuses on. What he observes is a perhaps surprising degree of social order (although perhaps less surprising to students of Goffman), where complaints are co-produced, responses are collaboratively pursued and arguments are developed collectively. These features suggest that audiences have a shared understanding of the various options of behaviour available during these interactions – including heckling – and their potential impact in the context of what Llewellyn terms a "highly competitive sequential environment" (p. 713); "[A]udiences … displayed remarkable cooperation" (p. 714). He thus provides more evidence that the collective audience response to speeches is an established form of social interaction, with predictable processes and patterns.

Perhaps leaders anticipate being booed more than being applauded, especially when addressing the sort of public meeting described by Llewellyn. In these circumstances, the processes and patterns of disaffiliation are worth understanding; although they may appear chaotic, they are nonetheless observing shared understandings of collective behaviour in which both the audience and speaker have a potential range of roles. Of course, disaffiliation does not require booing or heckling. Many speeches in organisations follow the convention of allowing questions to the speaker on completion; such questions may be more or less overt expressions of such disaffiliation rather than the requests for clarification that they are presented as being. On yet other occasions, questions may not be allowed as any expression of disaffiliation is not perceived to be desirable.

As we noted above, these discussions of human interaction in political settings again return us to the ideas of Goffman and his contemporaries and the discussion of the performance of authority in the first chapters in this section. In the examples included here, although our focus is on audience response, it is possible to discern the considerable thought given back stage to the creation of the desired impression front stage, much of which is linked to the sequencing of the interaction (e.g. speech/applause and questions/answers); we are reminded of the conclusions of Futrell (1999) in respect of performative governance considered earlier in this section. As Brown (2005) observes in his study of presidential candidates in the US, 'the successful actor (interpersonal or political) is one who carefully (but not conspicuously) maintains the necessary "dramaturgical discipline" … over his or her performance (p. 82, quotation marks in original). Even where audiences disaffiliate, there is evidence that disaffected actors still seek to achieve a working consensus about discontent before overtly

expressing their view in order to maintain face; sequential order is also maintained even in dissent.

Further, they serve to remind us of one of the key arguments of institutional theory. For example, March and Olsen (1984) draw attention to the symbolic role of deliberative procedures and technologies that embody a particular logic of appropriateness in which actors respond to situations by doing what they believe is expected of them given their position and responsibilities; they are critical of instrumentalist approaches to political life which present the symbolic as mere 'window-dressing'. The construction and interpretation of meaning is thus conceived as central to political deliberation, implying the importance of a consideration of organisational routines, symbols and administrative culture to organisational analysis.

There is undoubtedly a link between affiliation and followership, one that, as we saw in the last chapter, politicians attempt to exploit (e.g. references to collective identity between speaker and audience). Of course, most studies of affiliation that we have examined here relate to political parties which could be conceptualised as enclaves (especially during their party conferences when mutual support and solidarity is typically being at least partially performed for an external audience). As we have argued earlier, followership is a typical characteristic of the enclave way of organising. However, subordinates in a hierarchy and contacts in a market, may also express more or less affiliation whilst disaffiliation – and its expression – may be one of the features of the isolate influence in an organisation. It is interesting to note that lone responses were more common at stand-up comedy routines than at political party conferences; after all, we have suggested that stand-up comedy is an excellent example of the isolate style, both in terms of performance and audience.

Audience, authority and leadership

This discussion of affiliation – of the expression of commitment of the follower rooted in the acknowledgement of the authority of the leader – takes us back to one of the central arguments of this section and close to an explanation of what leadership is supposed to achieve; or, to put it another way, to an understanding of when claims to leadership may be plausible. On this account, the presence (or absence) of leadership is one – but only one – of the factors that explains why individuals do or do not commit themselves to a course of action in a specific situation. The acceptance of this authority by an audience – by

subordinates, superordinates and peers – is the purpose of the leadership performance. Whilst sensemaking by organisational leaders may make a significant contribute to producing audience commitment, it is not in itself sufficient to prompt that commitment; this is arguably one of the ways in which our account is distinct from the sensemaking tradition with which it shares a significant intellectual inheritance.

Furthermore, this chapter provides a number of perspectives that underline that commitment is never uniform across an audience, and that identifiable communities of interest both shape and are shaped by the responses of individuals. Furthermore, these communities of interest within organisational audiences may each represent a particular way of organising as described by NDIT, an argument that provides both some consistency and some limits to the range of communities of interest that may be present in such audiences. This aspect of our account, rooted in institutional theory, also distinguishes us from most authors exploring sensemaking and leadership which stress the centrality of context without possessing any robust theory that explains its consistent dimensions across organisations over time.

Finally, many of the accounts of sensemaking seem to focus on the instrumental and rational activities of leaders. In so doing, they overlook the symbolic and emotional dimensions. In this chapter – and in this section more broadly – the centrality of the symbolic and emotional impact of the leaders' performance in generating commitment has once again been in the foreground. This has been accompanied here by a brief excursion into the aesthetics of leadership; that is, the idea that leaders' emotional impact may be enhanced by exemplifying what are considered to be the desirable, we still hesitate to say beautiful, attributes of leadership in a particular organisational context. The significance of this aspect of leadership performance is underlined by the subjective/objective dichotomy explored above, where the former may more likely to generate "suspension of disbelief" in an audience member – and thus presumably commitment – than the latter.

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Section 4

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9

Ideas of Performance in Leadership Development Programmes: Towards a New Resolution of Some Old Problems?

The nature and longevity of the issues within leadership development

In 1992, Conger published his survey – partly based on his personal experience – of a sample of leadership development programmes then common in the US. He approached the task with a reasonable degree of scepticism noting, after a prolonged exploration of the born/made debate, that: "the development of leadership is a very complex process" (p. 33) … "[I]f experience is such an important teacher, and the motivation to lead is so rooted in one's past, and the leadership skills are indeed so complex and related to one's work and past, what role can training hope to play?" (p. 34). This distinction between experience and skills (and also knowledge) underpins Grint's (2007) Aristotelian analysis of how leaders may learn to lead so that programmes do not "confuse and conflate knowledge, skills and wisdom … all three are necessary and mutually supportive: knowledge can be taught in lectures but skills must be honed through practice while wisdom can only be secured by experiencing leadership itself" (p. 242). Together they represent a significant challenge to practitioners of leadership development which is as pertinent to our leadership framework as any other (and perhaps more so given that it arose out of and was honed within our work with programme participants).

Conger identified four broad categories of programme, most of which lasted three–five days. Whilst any might use a mix of interventions, each approached leadership training predominantly from one of these perspectives:

- *Personal growth* – a combination of outdoor-adventure and psychological exercises that encourage participants to reflect on their

values, desires and behaviours and which are built upon the foundation of adventure experiences for adolescents and influenced by innovations at the National Training Laboratories (e.g. T-groups) and human potential movement; usually provided by private companies.
- *Conceptual understanding* – a classroom-based approach to developing cognitive understanding of leadership; traditionally delivered by universities but also by private providers focused on one model.
- *Feedback* – a classroom-based approach which deploys pre-designed instruments to enable assessment of the participant by work colleagues in order for him/her to improve personal performance; typically run by private companies.
- *Skill Building* – Often linked to a company and/or a model, designers focus on the key leadership skills (e.g. shaping organisational vision); they are run by either academic or commercial institutions.

Despite the brevity of most interventions and the lack of robust evaluations of their impact, he is not completely pessimistic: "training can play a vital role in leadership development … (1) develop and refine certain of the teachable skills, (2) improve the conceptual abilities of managers, (3) tap individuals' personal needs, interests, and self-esteem, and (4) help managers see and move beyond their interpersonal blocks" (p. 34). He identifies three elements of course design that would enhance their impact: modular interventions spread over a prolonged period; more pre- and post-course contact with participants by providers; and more innovative class sessions. There are a number of interesting aspects of this, albeit anecdotal, study, not least that it introduces a number of themes that are still very pertinent today.

Firstly, the component parts of leadership development programmes – in terms of both content and intervention – have changed little over the past 20 years (and Conger also notes the presence of certain other techniques that are still familiar, such as action learning). A remarkable uniformity does seem to have arisen in the contemporary approaches described by Day (2000) and Peck (2006). In this latter review of studies of leadership development programmes in the NHS, the author found the following typical elements: seminars and directed reading around theories and frameworks of organisational theory and development; action-learning, coaching; mentoring; work-based projects; and explorations of personal style through the use of a variety of tools (such as 360 degree feedback). Day (2000) analyses in some depth the

strengths and weaknesses of a very similar list of interventions, but substitutes networks for the class-room or text-based sessions.

Critics have suggested that such programmes have a number of limitations. Beyond this basic similarity in design, the Kellogg Foundation (2002) notes that "[F]ew leadership programmes have developed a theory of change that explicitly links programs activities to short-term and long-term outcomes and impact" (p. 6). Mole (2004) asserts that most overlook the importance of the settings within which participants' leadership takes place: "[T]he hallmark of leadership courses offered on the open market is their complete disregard for the organisational contexts within which participants operate" (p. 125). However, Conger is shrewd enough to recognise the commercial constraints that inform the design and delivery of many of these programmes; client resources (time and money) on one hand, and contractor capacity and capability on the other. Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) highlight the critical management perspective on development interventions commissioned by employers: "a largely one-sided attempt by senior management to impose control or advance ideological power interests rather than as a means to "develop" employees in any kind of holistic or benevolent sense" (p. 14, quotation marks in original).

Secondly, and perhaps unsurprisingly given the focus of leadership theory up to the 1990s, the focus of the programmes that Conger discusses is very much on the individual participant and his/her personal development. Little has apparently changed since then: Day (2000) concludes that most of the interventions he describes are concerned with the intrapersonal rather than the interpersonal; Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) and the Kellogg Foundation (2002) both come to a similar conclusion. Again, Mole (2004) gives a robust assessment: "those who attend are likely to be offered a fascinating voyage of self-insight, aided and abetted by the wisdom of self-report questionnaires … the proposition here is that it is impossible to lead others without a deep understanding of oneself" (p. 125).

Thirdly, in the absence of formal evaluations, Conger estimates that a well-designed leadership programme could "result in something roughly like the following: (1) no behavioural change and little enhanced awareness for perhaps 10 to 20 percent of participants, (2) an expanded conceptual understanding of leadership for another 30 to 40 percent, (3) some positive though incremental behavioural change (in addition to a conceptual understanding) for an additional 25 to 30 percent, and (4) significant positive behavioural change for 10 percent" (p. 181). He concludes that these percentages are "worth the time and expenditure"

(p. 181). Following their more recent review of the literature, Mabey and Finch-Lees (2008) are less sanguine. They note that despite the continued high investment in such development there are "difficulties associated with tracking the direct and measurable benefits of management development" (p. 25). From a "scan" of 55 leadership development programmes, the Kellogg Foundation (2002) concludes that whilst individuals may report personal benefits there is little knowledge about the impact these programmes have on the efficiency or effectiveness of the organisations which sponsor their participants. It notes that: "[L]ack of resources for evaluating outcomes and impact" (p. 6) was frequent.

There are, of course, extant studies of what participants make of development programmes (again, Peck, 2006, for a summary of recent examples in healthcare and the sorts of methodological problems to which Mabey and Finch-Less are also referring). Frequently these are focused on the assessment of the instrumental impact of programmes (e.g. Peck, 2006). In a more recent study, Sturdy and his colleagues (2006) sought the views of MBA graduates on knowledge transfer with revealing results: "the principal experiential outcome of learning was a … sense of self confidence … what we labelled as 'identity work' or 'learning as becoming' was crucial … part of management can be seen as *a trick of self-confidence* in the sense of identity work" (pp. 854–855). In other words, graduates apparently focused upon the importance of the potential for the enhanced performance of leadership consequent upon the acquisition of new responses and behaviours with which to enrich their narratives of themselves rather than specific models or tools that they would directly apply.

What does a performative approach bring to consideration of these issues?

What does the apparent longevity of the issues raised in Conger's paper mean for the future of leadership development? In particular, what does a performative focus bring to consideration of these long-standing concerns? Perhaps the most effective method for doing this is to consider the design, delivery and evaluation of a development programme for aspirant chief executives in a healthcare setting which had performing leadership as one of its central strands (see Peck *et al.*, 2008, for a more detailed discussion). The core ideas of this book – the distinction between leadership "is" performance and leadership "as" performance and the enactment, narrative and audience framework

– became one of five themes explored with 33 participants comprising the two cohorts that we focus on here. Overall, six, relatively familiar, interventions took place over a period of 12 months:

– Four three-day residential modules;
– Coaching;
– Peer Mentoring;
– External Mentoring;
– Action Learning Sets; and,
– Work-based Projects.

The performing leadership theme consisted of five distinct elements which sought to broaden the range of interactions:

- "Taught" sessions on the theories of performance illustrated by film clips – all four modules;
- "Experiential" session on the embodiment of performance (e.g. use of the voice) – module one;
- "Workshop" session on developing participants' stories – module three;
- "Leadership Exchange" after module three; and
- "Reflective" sessions based on exercises undertaken by participants in the workplace (of which more below) which were explored in the subsequent module – modules two, three and four.

An independent external evaluation of the complete leadership development programme was commissioned to examine impact on: personal development; organisational capability; and service delivery. In order to analyse these different facets, the evaluation incorporated semi-structured interviews, a Q-sort methodology and a quantitative programme survey (see Flanaghan *et al.*, 2008 for further detail). In addition to the evaluation, the current authors sought to assess in more depth the impact of the performing leadership framework.

Within this assessment, all participants were asked to complete at the outset a survey which posed a range of open ended questions relating to leadership: what participants thought makes a good leader; what their organisations expected of a leader; whether participants had ever thought of leadership as a performance; and so on. The aim of this survey was to elicit participants' implicit leadership theories; that is, to start them reflecting on what they considered effective leadership before they had engaged with the interventions within the

programme. Survey responses were complemented by the outputs of the reflective exercises which participants were asked to undertake – one relating to each aspect of the enactment-narrative-audience framework – after every residential module. These exercises were accompanied by a proforma which asked participants to reflect on a particular incident and then to articulate what this example told them about the practice implications of this element of the framework. More specifically:

- the enactment exercise invited participants to examine a formal organisational event in which they played a role using the dramaturgical framework outlined in Chapter 5;
- the narrative exercise asked participants to describe an occasion in which they told a story (and then bring that story to the "workshop" session); and
- the audience exercise suggested participants consider the ways in which they prepared for and dealt with the response of those who had witnessed one of their performances (and this was linked to the "leadership exchange" where peer mentors observed their partners and could thus comment on their relationship with – in part by being a member of – the audience).

Initial survey of perceptions of leadership

Of the 33 participants, 20 completed the survey of leadership perceptions (61% completion rate). Of these, nine were female and 11 were male, broadly reflecting the gender composition of the participants. Initial questions asked what attributes make a good leader and a bad leader. Typically, responses included a list of between three and five different attributes and the most popular suggestions from these cat-

Table 9.1 What attributes make good and bad leaders?

What attributes make a good leader?	What attributes make a bad leader?
Vision	Inauthentic
Ability to communicate well	Poor communication
Authenticity	Autocratic
Motivational	Disengaged
Approachable	

egories are provided in Table 9.1. However, the free-text responses are also interesting, first of all about a good leader:

> *The art of persuasion. Knowledgeable about most things and able to draw on specific expertise when required. High degree of influence and credibility with other leaders and staff. Visionary and able to articulate that vision in ways that others can understand and this makes sense of their own role in the future of the organisation.*

Unsurprisingly a number of the attributes of good leaders are the inverse of those attributed to bad leaders; so, where authenticity was thought to be important in making a good leader, inauthenticity was often cited as the attribute of a bad leader. In other words, respondents tended to view good and bad leaders in terms of dualisms, reflecting a long established tradition in the leadership literature which has shaped a number of common assessment tools. Furthermore, the attributes associated with good leaders look remarkably similar to those suggested in the transformational leadership questionnaire (outlined in Table 9.2); this apparent correlation is discussed further below.

As noted in Chapter 2, transformational leadership is often marked out in contrast to transactional leadership and for many writers (e.g. Bennis, 1994) this contrast serves to highlight the distinction between leadership and management. A subsequent question in the survey asked participants if there was any difference between a manager and a leader; an overwhelming 18 out of the 20 respondents suggested that

Table 9.2 Transformational leadership questionnaire

Leading and developing others	**Personal qualities**	**Leading the organisation**
Showing genuine concern	Being honest and consistent	Networking and achieving
Enabling	Acting with integrity	Focusing effort
Being accessible	Being decisive	Building a shared vision
Encouraging change	Inspiring others	Supporting a developmental culture
	Resolving complex problems	Facilitating change sensitively

(Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998)

there was a difference. In giving reasons why this might be so, leaders tended to be defined as strategic (i.e. doing the right thing) and managers as operational (i.e. doing the thing right), thus very much replicating the transformational/transactional model. A typical response was as follows:

> *Yes, I don't "manage" anyone at work, except my PA (who doesn't need managing!). I see my role almost entirely as a leader as everything that will make my organisation successful relies on excellent levels of influence and partnership working.*

This leads onto the next topic discussed in the survey. In addition to asking for personal perceptions of what constituted good leadership, respondents were also asked what their organisations expected of leadership. Responses to this question tended to focus on delivering results; leaders within these organisations were perceived as ultimately responsible for driving performance, improvement and outcomes. This was primarily achieved, according to the responses, through the ability to make good decisions. In addition to these instrumental tasks, respondents also indicated that their organisations expected their leadership to be visible both to their own organisation and to key partners across the local healthcare community.

The final substantive topic related to whether participants had ever considered the performative aspects of leadership. The majority of respondents suggested that they had, albeit within different contexts. Leadership had been seen in terms of performance by a large number of respondents when in board meetings, "set piece events" or other forms of "formal" settings (very much the leadership "is" performance mode). One typical response is as follows:

> *Tends to be on two types of occasions – when I'm performing at "senior" meetings (e.g. Boards) and when I'm presenting; and when I'm dealing with a crisis-type situation.*

Participants broadly considered leadership to be a performance: when it involved speaking at, or attending, a ritual-like event; where there was a period of crisis; or during a period that called for motivation of individuals or groups in support of large scale change. Consequently, when asked what kind of things go through their mind when performing the leader role, most responses tended to reflect these scenarios and cited issues relating to their literal performance

(thus thinking about the audience and also seeking to be especially engaging). For example:

> *I become much more conscious of what I'm saying and how I'm using my body. And how these actions will be (or could be) influencing the thoughts of the audience. I also become much more conscious that I must get things absolutely "right". I feel a heightened sense of responsibility.*

> *Being "more than myself" – difficult to explain but thinking of a powerful enhancement of my own personality – slightly exaggerated traits. I think about body language and in particular eye contact – always tryingto engage and connect with the most influential people in the room. Very audience aware – keep trying to read and gauge peoples' reactions to me.*

The props which participants suggested they used to perform their leadership role tended to relate to arranging furniture in a particular way or dressing in a specific manner ("*power dressing*" etc). Again, these responses focused on the ritualistic aspects of performance, suggestive once more of participants' keen sense of the importance of performance at such events and, albeit more implicitly, of their understanding of the particular requirements of these rituals within their institutional setting.

Overall, participants articulated a high sensitivity to the literal performative aspects of organisational ritual ("is" leadership); however, they showed much less concern with the manner in which notions of performance might shape everyday interactions ("as" leadership). The espoused leadership theories of respondents appeared consonant with the transformational model of leadership; given the influence of the transformational trope on the NHS Leadership Qualities Framework (Department of Health, 2001) this is probably unsurprising. As with the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (Table 9.2), one of the 15 dimensions of this framework relates to personal integrity. This focus perhaps starts to explain the prominence of authenticity in the attributes of good leaders articulated by participants; the connection (or, rather, imputed disconnection) between leader performance and leader authenticity became one of the topics of repeated discussion within this and other programmes (and thus the prompt for the following chapter).

Enactment

Completed after the first module, the enactment "reflective" exercise was the first of the three. Although the participants had been exposed

to the "is/as" distinction – and to a much lesser extent to the enactment-narrative-audience framework – they were still at a relatively early stage in terms of their engagement with the programme; this was apparent in their reflections here which were perhaps the least sophisticated of all those garnered during the programme. The critical incidents selected largely related to the ritual aspects of leadership, consistent with responses to the initial survey.

Participants were asked to reflect on issues such as: where they gave the performance; what their intention was in terms of dress, tone of voice etc.; how well they thought they used verbal and non-verbal cues to communicate their message; and what they perceived as the impact of the performance. Given that most of the incidents selected were formal events, many respondents indicated that they had little control over either the location or the layout of the venue. Due to this lack of perceived control over the setting of these performances, a number of individuals indicated that they thought carefully about issues over which they could take control, such at their choice of clothing and words. The following passage is illustrative of a number of these sorts of response. The setting is a "*formal presentation and review of the Trust Service Strategy*". This is described as "*contentious in terms of content with the Trust Board and some clinicians and managers*".

> *It was [a] performance by way of a formal presentation…to [a] relatively large group and the venue was dictated by this. I dressed deliberately powerfully and more formal than my general work clothes, I guess to demonstrate that we are serious about this strategy and the implications for the Trust are serious. I was deliberately succinct and careful not to pull my punches on the messages. I generally inject humour into my presentations but not on this occasion. On reflection I could have done more in terms of using eye contact and non-verbal cues to reinforce the messages and engage key members of the audience. I instead relied on the sense of portent that my words and appearance portrayed.*

There is a strong sense in these responses that because of the formality of these official situations – and in particular of the emotional tone that was called for – participants deliberately behaved in particular ways (e.g. not using their usual humour). Participants seemed to understand both that the creation of the appropriate emotional tone in these settings called for the attribution of gravitas and that certain aspects of performance were most likely to attract that attribution.

Much less present were accounts of leadership "as"; that is, enactment of leadership within the warp and weft of everyday organisational life. One participant suggested in their proforma that they were unable to do the exercise as the "*critical incident approach doesn't work very well*". Nonetheless, the observations provided by this individual seemed to suggest that they were sensitive to the metaphorical notions of leadership:

> *On reflection, most of what I do involves "acting". I choose dress, voice and 'character' based on the audience, the objectives of the "incident" (usually a meeting or workshop), pre-existing relationship with key players, my perception of my "political" strength etc there are limits to how far from my "true" self I can deviate but curiously I would argue that few people really know what I really think about an issue. I also note that I can be difficult company in domestic circumstance because I have put on an "act" at work (being nice to people) and don't want to be so nice out of work on "my" time. I can't say I really think about the "act" I put on. After nearly 20 years at a senior manager/director level much of the act is automatic. That said, I do reflect on why things go badly when they (occasionally) do so and this learning is used subconsciously at a later date.*

This extended passage demonstrates a number of issues that arise in relation to leadership as a metaphorical performance. For the participant, the dominant metaphor is "acting". Although other participants in reflecting on ritualistic events also referred to acting, it seems that this individual was suggesting something rather different in that the idea of performance seems to have informed all of his interactions at work (and, indeed, beyond work). Furthermore, the individual claims a clear – after 20 years almost intuitive – understanding of the institutional setting within which these performative processes were played out. This metaphorical performance of leadership also required, the participant apparently suggests, the adoption of an emotional tone that was sensitive to the institutional context within which interactions took place. "*Being nice to people*" is presumably shorthand for many of the attributes outlined in the NHS leadership qualities framework; management of emotion – theirs and others – appears central to this leaders' conception of efficacious performance. Whilst the performance of appropriate emotional displays within ritual settings may seem a daunting enough challenge for leaders, the prospect of exercising such self-discipline in all organisational interactions may simply

seem unrealistic to many (and thus, perhaps, participants' general focus on the formal events).

Narrative

Participants were encouraged to interpret the notion of narrative literally and asked to provide a transcript of their "story". On the whole, these had been very carefully crafted to ensure sure that they were able to convey the key messages contained therein. Three characteristics stood out.

Firstly, most selected narratives were told at organisational rituals, occasions where they had time to prepare what it is that they would say to an audience who were gathered to hear them. Given that the script had largely been prepared prior to the event, most of the reflection explored the way in which that narrative was delivered. For example:

> *My assessment of this experience was that being intentional about how I was going to deliver the performance and paying particular attention to the pitch and speed of delivery greatly improved my performance. I was able to come across as calm and composed and fully prepared. I also chose to veer away from my normal presentation style of using powerpoint presentation etc. and instead sat down facing the board with no visual aids, thus I was able to maintain eye contact and adjust my performance in response to non verbal cues from the audience. I also kept the narrative brief and focused on the big picture.*

Secondly, many of the narratives were, if compared to classic accounts of effective stories (see Chapter 7), rather poor. Overall, they lacked a formal structure (e.g. beginning, middle and end), human interest (e.g. protagonist/antagonist) and compelling incidents (e.g. setbacks/resolutions). Furthermore, in many the language tended to be technocratic and rather colourless. A short extract will have to serve to illustrate this point:

> *Looking to the future the major challenge for [Trust] indeed all providers is to maintain meeting the waiting times.*
>
> - *The tariff is reducing income by some 2–3% pa*
> - *The drive towards more community based services could lead to less activity and income. The development of commercial GP providers will accelerate this*

- *Becoming a FT sees the need to post surplus to provide an investment stream.*

To manage with this income loss we need to look at annual CIPs of 3–4%, so typically we need within 3 years to be looking at doing the same levels of activity but 10% less beds, 10% less theatre & ops capacity and 10% less staff.

Thirdly, there was much reference within these narratives to "vision". Participants were using formal rituals to articulate an aspect of the future aspiration – the "quest" – of their organisation.

It was an ok introduction … however, if I did it again I would have spent more time and emphasis on the vision section "looking 1 year ahead how you would like your service or area to be. A shining beacon to NHS". Expanding more on this so staff thought outside of the box, to focus on what they think a great service would look like and consider good practise from outside of the NHS. During the day we found that some project teams clearly got the "start with the vision" approach whereas others initially focussed on the 'what is wrong with our service' approach.

In so doing, they were exemplifying the two characteristics of storytelling raised in Chapter 7. On the one hand, participants were clearly attempting to influence colleagues' sensemaking. On the other, there is a clear sense in their reflections of the need for this vision – and its articulation – to be seen as possessing authenticity or integrity; this was regarded by many as an important means through which the audience might be engaged and made to feel some "*joint ownership*" for the story. Without being attributed authenticity or integrity, participants suggested that the message would not be credible. Implicit in these statements is an account that suggests participant understanding of how such credibility would be construed according to the particular institutional context within which the vision was described.

Audience

A number of the responses to the two reflective exercises discussed above already considered issues around audience; these reflections were usually in relation to a defined audience where the roles and rules were set ahead of the interaction. These ritual events also predominated in accounts of audience given in this exercise.

However, some individuals did take a slightly different perspective. One participant considered the audience to be the entire organisation and talked about how the chief executive made sure that they both had regular face to face meetings with this entire audience. This next reflection focused on the attempt to shape the expectations of the audience outside of any established formal setting:

> *I walked the site and listened to, spoke to and met with all levels of staff on a daily basis. Dialogue was open and two way, and feedback encouraged…My perception and experiences was that their expectations were not uniform, it flowed well and became more interactive during the first year as both their and my confidence grew. There were some early wins for the site which gave a level of confidence, but of course there was also a lot of mistrust which I and others needed to acknowledge and understand, or address.*

This account acknowledges two important aspects of organisational audiences. Firstly, they are not singular, a key finding from many studies of audiences over recent years which is reflected in Chapter 8. As a consequence, this participant recognises that some ways of communicating and interacting with some parts of the audience may not be as appropriate to others; once more the issue of trust is stressed and notions of integrity and authenticity again appear in relation to being a good leader. Secondly, organisational audiences persist over time, and so, therefore, must the performance of the leader.

The final example we will draw upon in this section demonstrates the interaction between the literal ("is") and the metaphorical ("as") conceptions within our approach to performing leadership. Some respondents noted that what they did outside of formal settings could impact on the outcomes within those settings. One individual spoke about making a presentation to Professional Executive Committee (a sub-committee of the organisational board) members during a routine meeting. Unsure as to how the recommendations would be received, the participant had undertaken just such "backstage" work, consulting with colleagues beforehand and dealing with a number of comments and concerns. The reception at the subsequent meeting:

> *was better than I had anticipated – a clear way forward was agreed (i.e. not in any sense imposed). I largely put this down to the work done outside of the meeting.*

Reviewing the interventions as a whole

Overall, the responses to the survey and the three reflective exercises demonstrate that considering leadership in terms of performance is not unfamiliar to organisational leaders, at least not in the English NHS. At the same time, it is apparent that performing leadership is not a simple task. Indeed, participants were unfamiliar with – and reported benefits from being introduced to – some of the approaches to enactment, narrative and audience that have been touched on above (see Flanaghan *et al.*, 2008). It would appear that, for many participants, the programme introduced frameworks for seeing more clearly aspects of leadership of which they were already aware.

It has also highlighted two related issues. The first, and perhaps the most significant, is that although participants articulated a high sensitivity to the performative aspects of organisational ritual ("is" leadership), they showed much less concern with the manner in which notions of performance might shape everyday interactions ("as" leadership). This might have been expected given that the leadership literature has tended to be preoccupied with those settings where individuals are clearly identifiable as leaders. Performing leadership suggests that efficacious performance relies to a large extent upon the shared understandings of performer, co-performers and audience about the rules of and roles within which the performance is given. Furthermore, the data suggests that the management of leaders' emotions appears central to this efficacious performance of the leadership role.

Secondly, programme participants espoused implicit leadership assumptions which were closely related to the transformational leadership questionnaire. Again, this is perhaps unsurprising given that this model is promoted within the NHS both through the Leadership Qualities Framework (Department of Health, 2001) and the advocacy of senior leaders (e.g. Bevan, 2005). One of the dimensions of this framework relates to personal integrity and this focus starts to explain the prominence of authenticity in the attributes of good leaders given by participants (and the potential tension between these notions and those of performance to which we return in Chapter 10). At the same time, the transformational trope seems to be shaping perceptions of leadership aesthetics within the NHS; that is, it is apparently defining those desirable – again, we are reluctant to say beautiful – aspects of leadership performances to which positive attributions will be given.

Finally, the independent evaluation of the programme described it as "a very successful programme including good conceptual design and delivery and very significant personal benefit for almost all

participants" (Flanaghan *et al.*, 2008: 5), although it noted that it took place too soon after its conclusion to confidently judge its impact upon organisational effectiveness. Of the five themes that made up the programme, leadership and performance was the one most highly rated by participants. Typical responses included (Flanaghan *et al.*, 2008: 50):

> *Leadership as performance was particularly valuable given that part of my PDP [personal development plan] was emotional intelligence issues. Gave me real insights into the importance of understanding your impact on others and maximising the performance of the team as a whole.*

> *Since attending the…programme I am more self-aware – seeing leadership as a performance in both a verbal and non-verbal manner. I realise the appropriateness of deploying the correct manner and style, at the correct time.*

> *I found the performance aspects…most beneficial and have worked hard to enact and express in the workplace on a daily basis through increased preparation and reflective review.*

The implications for the three issues

We want now to briefly assess the ways in which this approach to embedding leadership performance into leadership development offers the prospect of progress on the three issues identified above.

Firstly, the perfomative strand appears to offer the potential for new approaches in terms of content – e.g. theories and evidence from the fields of performance and cultural studies – and process – e.g. experiential sessions, narrative workshops, reflections on practice – to be added to the palate of the leadership development practitioner. We acknowledge that not all of these interventions are new; for instance, there have been other innovations based around theatrical texts and techniques over recent years. However, we would contend that this is one of the few programmes that has sought to integrate them into a coherent design; that, in the words of the Kellogg Foundation (2002), has explicitly linked such programme activities to outcomes for participants. In so doing, it has enabled participants both to debate theoretical ideas about context and to explore the relevance of the performative model within their own leadership practice in their workplace, thus addressing, at least in part, some of the challenges pithily articulated by Mole (2004). Other elements of the overall programme design – e.g. the work-based project, action learning, coaching and

mentoring – also sought to make this link. Together, we would also argue that they offer the opportunity for participants to gain insights into their practice which may, especially if continued beyond the 12 months of the programme, develop their wisdom as well as their skills and knowledge.

Secondly, this theme of the programme does not start from the perspective of leadership development being concerned with the intrapersonal. Indeed the interpersonal dimension – the relational nature – of leadership is fundamental to the approach.

Thirdly, the programme, at least in this manifestation, has been the subject of both an external evaluation overall and an internal assessment of this strand. Whilst, the former is vulnerable to many of the criticisms made of such evaluations (and we have already noted one of these above), it does provide some assurance for the commissioner, participants and providers that the programme is perceived to be beneficial to them by those who are participating and – albeit to a lesser extent – to their chief executives. Interestingly, there is some corroboration of the findings of Sturdy *et al.* (2006) that one of the main outcomes of the programme is the increased confidence of participants (including in the eyes of their chief executives).

Clearly, the internal assessment is even less methodologically robust (and that is why we do not call it an evaluation), in particular in asking for the responses of participants to topics introduced by the assessors themselves. Nonetheless, at the very least it confirms the relevance to leadership practice of the frameworks for performance discussed in this book.

What does this programme tell us about performing leadership?

It is important to recognise that performing leadership was only one of five themes that comprised the programme that we have examined. Another was entitled "Personal and psychological resources" and had an explicit focus on the intrapersonal. This design reflects that, ultimately, we would share Day's (2000) recommendation that "the distinction between leader development and leadership development should not be taken as edict for organizations to choose one over the other. Either approach is incomplete by itself" (p. 605). Whilst we may bemoan the dominance of the psychological paradigm in leader(ship) studies and on leader(ship) development, we would not wish to deny participants on our programmes the benefit of the insights that it can bring.

Finally, we want to return to the subject of experience (Conger) and wisdom (Grint) with which we opened this chapter. In some respects, of course, it may be unrealistic – and perhaps unfair – to expect leadership development programmes to deliver greater wisdom in the same manner that they deliver enhanced knowledge and honed skills (and Grint does note that "wisdom without knowledge and technique is pointless", 2007: 238).

At the same time, it is entirely reasonable to expect programmes to put in place processes through which wisdom may be gained. Following Aristotle, Grint links wisdom to the "good" as opposed to the "true" where "what counts as leadership – and what counts as the collective good in any circumstances – depends upon the local social context" (p. 238) and stresses the importance of experience in being able to judge the good. Of course, experience needs to be subject to reflection before it can become wisdom and we would suggest that some of the approaches – both theoretical and processual – taken within this programme significantly increase the opportunities for such reflection. Perhaps that is what one participant meant when they reflected on the impact of the programme: "*[M]ore politically aware*" … .

10
Authenticity and the Performance of Leadership: Neither a Paradox nor a Model

The apparent paradox of performing authenticity

In Chapter 9, we examined the implications of deploying performative notions of leadership within leadership development programmes. One of the themes that participants raised in the particular programme we described there – and, indeed, in most other interventions where we have explored these issues – was authenticity; that is, the performance of leadership is perceived as being potentially "inauthentic". Given that this challenge recurs so frequently, we felt it was incumbent on us to address it directly. Furthermore, and whilst acknowledging that the institutional setting (i.e. the NHS) of these participants privileges notions such as authenticity and integrity in its Leadership Quality Framework, recent years have seen, as we have suggested in Chapter 4, the emergence of authenticity as a topic of increasing concern within leadership studies.

As Cooper *et al.* (2005) note, authentic leadership is still a new and relatively underdeveloped concept. Nonetheless, it has already spawned a number of bestselling business and management texts (e.g. George *et al.*, 2007; Terry, 1993; Hames, 2007) which seem to profess authenticity as the new "answer" to leadership. A recent piece in the *Harvard Business Review*, entitled Managing Authenticity, reflects its topicality; interestingly Goffee and Jones (2005) argue: "authenticity has often been thought of as the opposite of artifice … managers who assume that their authenticity stems from an uncontrolled expression of their inner selves will never become authentic leaders. Great leaders understand that their reputation for authenticity needs to be painstakingly earned and carefully managed" (p. 94).

The tension between authenticity and performance articulated by participants in our programme is familiar from some of the key sociological

texts of the past 50 years; as Goffman (1959) noted, actors struggle with the "amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression" (p. 243). Brown (2005), in a study of the Bush/Kerry presidential election, expresses the problem neatly: "Dramaturgical analysis, with its vocabulary of theatricality, gestures, moves, countermoves, expression games and concealments, suggests a concept of the self that makes authenticity highly problematic" (p. 89). The apparent paradox that emerges is, therefore, relatively straightforward: how can a leader be authentic if the attribution of their authenticity is the consequence of a conscious performance of behaviour that will lead to imputation of that attribute? Of course, it is a paradox that dissolves if we consider both the self to be social and episodic – where the individual becomes a leader as much as the experience of leadership shapes what the individual subsequently becomes – and the notion of authenticity (like integrity or sincerity) to be attributional (where it would potentially be a poor performance for any leader to claim authenticity for themselves).

Many writers on authenticity simply do not engage with the paradox at all, simply holding fast to the efficacy of being consistent with an internal and enduring self. Given the pre-eminence of the psychological paradigm in the leadership literature presented in Chapter 2, this is scarcely surprising; indeed, many recent papers on authenticity have sought to demonstrate the links between leadership traits or behaviours and authenticity (e.g. Yammarino *et al.*, 2008; Cooper *et al.*, 2005; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). As Bill George (former Chairman and CEO of Medtronic) declares: "after years of studying leaders and their traits, I believe that leadership begins and ends with authenticity. It's being yourself; being the person you were created to be" (George, 2003: 11). Authentic leadership has been defined in a range of ways but common to most definitions is this idea that authentic leaders "align their actions and behaviours with their core, internalised beliefs" (Harvey *et al.*, 2006: 2).

Authentic leaders: the new priesthood in organisational life?

Shamir and Eilam (2005: 396–398) represent this trend when they summarise what they see as the common defining characteristics in descriptions of authentic leaders:

1. "Authentic leaders do not fake their leadership. They do not pretend to be leaders just because they are in a leadership position, for

instance as a result of an appointment to a management position. Nor do they work on developing an image or persona of a leader. Performing a leadership function and related activities are self-expressive acts for authentic leaders. It is part of what they feel to be their 'true' or 'real' self. In other words, when enacting the leadership role, authentic leaders are being themselves (as opposed to conforming to others' expectations).

2. Authentic leaders do not take on a leadership role or engage in leadership activities for status, honor or other personal rewards. Rather, they lead from convictions. They have a value-based cause or mission … authentic leaders are interested not only in being all that they can be but also in making a difference.
3. Authentic leaders are originals, not copies. This does not mean that they are necessarily unique or very different from each other in their personality traits. Furthermore, their values, convictions, cause or mission may be similar in content to those of other leaders and followers. However, the process through which they have arrived at these convictions and causes is not a process of imitation. Rather, they have internalised them on the basis of their own personal experiences. They hold their values to be true not because these values are socially or politically appropriate, but because they have experienced them to be true …
4. Authentic leaders are leaders whose actions are based on their values and convictions. What they say is consistent with what they believe, and their actions are consistent with both their talk and their beliefs. Because they act in accordance to their values and beliefs rather than to please an audience, gain popularity or advance some personal or narrow political interest, authentic leaders can be characterized as having a high level of integrity".

This extended quote is typical of these kinds of accounts of authentic leaders, where leadership starts to sound like a vocation, strikingly reminiscent of the priesthood in their invocations of values, convictions and selflessness. These may well be characteristics that, at the beginning of the 21st century, we wish to see in our leaders – they convey the contemporary vision of a beautiful leader – but they do not undermine the idea that they have to be performed. Indeed, we would argue that performing in a manner authentic to the organisational context is one of the ways in which leaders gain the acceptance of their authority by an audience. Of course, as this book has sought to show, an account of context is essential to our conception of performing leadership; as

with most other leadership theories, adherents of authentic leadership on the whole fail to provide such an account.

Interest in the concept of authenticity is often suggested to have emerged in reaction to a number of organisational failures and/or scandals (e.g. Enron, Arthur Andersen and WorldCom) and is a manifestation of a resurgence in ethics-related research (for other examples see, Veiga, 2004; Weaver & Agle, 2002). As we suggested in Chapter 2, this period witnessed individual leaders being implicated in financial fraud, environmental damage and the abuse of labour (particularly in developing countries). These occurred at a time where models of transformational and charismatic leadership were being afforded a particularly prominent role within leadership theory. We have previously outlined a number of the criticisms of these models (see Chapter 2), but foremost amongst these is their tendency to concentrate on individual leaders who are afforded high degrees of agency in their influence over followers. Several commentators have criticised these models, highlighting that transformation and charisma may lead to negative outcomes where individuals further their own interests at the expense of the "wider good" (e.g. Kets de Vries, 2004).

This context is important – and in the light of recent bank failures likely to become more important – when considering the interest which authentic leadership has generated in the academic and organisational literature. We are reminded of the period following World War Two when psychological profiling gained a prominent place within leadership theories in an attempt to find a way to avoid the atrocities of the past being repeated again in the future. The contemporary emphasis on selflessness – as opposed to selfishness – is arguably a response to these organisational scandals where responsibility was laid at the door of individuals who were accused of acting unethically in their own personal interests. A constructivist reading might suggest that the importance of the integrity of leaders has come to the fore in debates surrounding leadership as a result of these scandals and has influenced the emergence and popularity of authentic leadership.

Nonetheless, models of authentic leadership have much in common with the transformational and charismatic models (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), particularly with their roots in "positive approaches to leadership" (Ilies *et al.*, 2005: 374; see also Luthans & Avolio, 2003; May *et al.*, 2003). At face value, focusing attention on ethical and moral issues in an attempt to compensate for these recent difficulties may seem like

a positive progression. However, the authentic leadership literature possesses a range of problems to which we now turn.

The problems with authentic leadership

We want to draw attention to four apparent – and to some extent overlapping – problems with the trope of authentic leadership: the problem of the essential self; the problem of definition; the problem of the reported experiences of organisational members with identity; and the problem of authenticity and followers. Subsequently, we return to the importance of authenticity, emotion and leadership.

Like a number of concepts within the field of leadership which have recently garnered attention, the idea of authenticity is not new, with its roots in ancient Greek philosophy (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Over the past eighty years or so, a conception of authenticity has emerged which has been heavily influenced by positivistic psychology and organisational studies literatures (see Harter, 2002 for a historical account of this concept). Humanistic psychologists such as Rogers (e.g. 1959, 1963) and Maslow (e.g. 1954, 1971) strongly influenced the concept of authenticity as it is understood today within the leadership literature. Although we will not labour the point unduly again here, this notion of authenticity relies on a concept of an internal, consistent and essential self which we have argued against throughout this text; if we do not have a "true self" then it is hard to be true to it!

As the definitions set out above highlight; authentic leaders are generally viewed as having a clear and consistent moral compass; "Because such fully functioning persons are unencumbered by others' expectations for them, they can make more sound personal choices" (Avolio & Gardner, 2005: 319). It is suggested that authentic leaders have a high degree of self-resolution (Turner, 1978) or self-concept clarity (Campbell *et al.*, 1996); that is, individuals possess delineated beliefs about self and act in ways which are consistent with them. In Chapter 3 we discussed a number of difficulties with the way in which the concept of self has been treated within the dominant leadership literatures. Drawing on traditions outside of psychology we argued that, rather than the self being unitary and knowable, personal identity is open, shifting and ambiguous, partially in response to the context in which an individual finds themselves.

At its most basic level, some proponents of the theory contend that individual leaders may be considered as "authentic" or "inauthentic" (see May *et al.*, 2003); this quite neatly reminds us of all the other

dualisms that are so popular within the leadership literature. However, as most theorists of authentic leadership are quick to point out, this is overly simplistic; authenticity is not an either/or condition (Erickson, 1995b). Individuals are not either completely authentic or completely inauthentic. Authenticity exists on some form of continuum where "full authenticity" sits at one extreme and "completely inauthentic" sits at the other (Erickson, 1995a). In other words, many theorists recognise authenticity as a relative concept where individuals act more or less "authentically" at different times and within different situations. This, we would argue, is a crucial point of clarification, but one which is often overlooked, particularly in the more populist authentic leadership literature.

Many descriptions of authentic leaders concern individuals who are suggested to be intrinsically "good" and operating in the best interests of others to "positive" affect. May *et al.* (2003: 248) are fairly typical of authentic leadership theorists in suggesting that "these are the leaders who, when called upon by the hand of fate, will be the ones who take a stand that changes the course of history for others, be they organizations, departments or just other individuals". As before, we would respond that, without an understanding of the context or institutional setting for the performance of leadership, this normative attribution of core values or positive morals is vacuous. Conceptions of "goodness" may only be defined in relation to specific settings, and even then may differ according the divergent worldviews of the parties to the organisational settlement. Much of the authentic leadership literature fails to define these contexts – although often implicitly seeming to refer to a hierarchical form of organising – and alludes to "goodness" in generally altruistic terms.

In 2004, *The Leadership Quarterly* ran a series of letters between Arthur Bedeian and David Day entitled "Can chameleons lead?". In this exchange Bedeian and Day discuss the self-monitoring theory literature. In this context the idea of self-monitoring is taken to mean the amount an individual observes, regulates, and controls the self that they display in interpersonal relationships (Snyder, 1979). High self-monitors (HSMs) are seen as those individuals who are sensitive to contextual cues and are able to modify their behaviour for the sake of desired public appearances. "HSMs tend to play to their audiences, having a plastic readiness to garner signals from their surroundings and then mold their images accordingly" (Bedeian in Bedeian & Day, 2004: 688). In contrast, low self-monitors (LSMs) "are generally portrayed as behaving in a manner that accu-

rately reflects their authentic selves" (Bedeian in Bedeian & Day, 2004: 688).

The key issue under debate in this series of letters is that in an earlier article, Day and colleagues (2002) suggest that HSM individuals are more likely to emerge as leaders than LSMs. This is the point with which Bedeian takes issue. Bedeian expresses concerns that the characteristics of HSMs are not what he would consider a "true leader" and that they are capable of "talking a good game" but "seldom capable of standing and delivering" (p. 692). In terms of the issue of moral values and leadership, Day responds, "I do not believe that low self-monitors would automatically be ethical leaders because they follow an internal compass. It depends on the underlying values that are guiding a leader's behaviour. Which direction does the internal compass point?" (Day in Bedeian & Day, 2004: 704). Naturally, we find ourselves very much in sympathy with Day in this very particular dispute. More broadly, as we view authenticity as lying in the eye of the beholder, we are content to allow that HSMs may be seen as more authentic in hierarchical settings and LSMs gain that attribution in enclave settings. Indeed, we have only to think of leadership in "terrorist" cells – often only linked by effusive expressions of shared moral or ethical values (and who are often cited as having effective leadership, e.g. Raab & Milward, 2003) – to remind ourselves that LSMs can hold moral compasses very different to our own and yet still be efficacious leaders on their own terms.

On other accounts, authenticity is frequently posited to be something which is built up throughout the course of an individual's life. It is proposed that development often occurs in relation to "trigger events"; significant episodes in life that stimulate personal growth (Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Thus, in most versions of authentic leadership, authenticity is not an inherent characteristic which one does or does not possess from the outset, but something which is honed over time. This temporal dimension is also important, as it takes time to create the link between espoused values and values in action.

This account has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, it is entirely unclear at what point an individual becomes "authentic" and, furthermore, what they are before this authenticity is achieved; it would seem hard to frame them "inauthentic" purely because of a lack of life events. Secondly, it seems to locate authenticity in the perception of others; presumably, if authenticity was an innate characteristic then my first action congruent with my values would be as authentic as

my tenth; however it seems that it is only when subordinates, superordinates or peers perceive the congruence over time that authenticity is exhibited.

Turning to leaders' experience, we have argued in Chapter 3 that the recent identity strand in organisational studies (e.g. Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Ford, 2006; Kondo, 1990), based on empirical studies, serves to remind us that the identities – the selves – of individuals are shaped by the setting within which they are framed. In these circumstances, it is even more difficult to conceive of an internal and essential "authentic self"; indeed, this literature points us to the requirement for – and the challenge of – leaders in contemporary organisations performing a self that others can perceive as "authentic". Performing authenticity in a setting where authenticity is considered desirable involves comprehension of the institutional values and norms which are endorsed within that setting and responding in a way that is considered legible and legitimate by a variety of stakeholders.

Attempting to address this issue, Trilling (1972) proposes that authenticity differs from the concept of sincerity, as the latter refers to the extent to which one's self is represented accurately to others rather than to the extent to which one is true to the self. Thus, authenticity does not involve the explicit consideration of others, it is deemed wholly in relation to the notion of its own being (Erickson, 1995b). Notwithstanding that this seems to us an unhelpful semantic manoeuvre, this proposition raises a number of further questions. For instance, it suggests that authentic individuals will not be swayed by the environment that they are in; that is, they will always act according to some innate value or moral code. However, to claim that an individual might form some notion of self without reference to the social and cultural environs within which his or her identity has been formed and is expressed is profoundly implausible.

We have already drawn on Ford and Lawler's (2007) social constructivist and existentialist critiques of mainstream leadership literatures in Chapters 2 and 3, but it is worth returning to this work in relation to discussions about authenticity for their insights into what leadership means to individuals "in the world" (as opposed to being abstracted into universal generalisms). Ford and Lawler argue that "[P]eople's sense of who they are and who they are becoming is not only multiple, complex and fragmented, it is also inter-subjective and relational. Our narratives of the self may be quite different when interacting with different individuals … leadership is not the result of a recipe of behav-

iour and beliefs but is constructed as part of a continuing relationship and is defined by and within that relationship" (p. 419). Accepting this critique of identity would suggest that it is not "inauthentic" to interact with different individuals in different ways, rather it is a function of the relational nature of identity. It is therefore important that if individuals are to become "authentic" in their relationships with others that the notion of self (or selves) is recognised as "dialogical" as opposed to monological (Taylor, 1991). Thus, attention to relationships and inter-relationships and their associated dialogues are crucial in considering the credibility – or authenticity – of processes of leadership. Examining dialogue uncovers locally constructed and interpreted meanings of what constitutes leadership within that specific context, be it authentic or otherwise.

Furthermore, and as suggested in Chapter 3, it is not just that an individual's identity is formed through interaction with socio-cultural contexts; how identity is expressed and experienced on an ongoing basis is related to the institutional contexts within which the individual is situated. If authenticity is neither an either/or (Erickson, 1995b) nor an essential and internal condition then it is necessarily relative, and this relativity relates to context (e.g. roles, norms etc.). Understanding the institutional setting is crucial in assessing the degree of authenticity which an individual may be perceived to hold. Avolio *et al.* (2004b: 4) define authentic leaders partly in this way, as "those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character". Yet although such authors talk about context, like so much of the leadership literature they seem, at best, to be discussing a non-specific Anglo-American organisational setting at a particular point in time.

In a study of gender and authenticity, Eagly (2005) describes the emphasis of authentic leadership models as being "curiously one-sided" (p. 460) in focusing on the values and beliefs of individual leaders at the expense of those of followers: "[E]ven if leaders carry out their role in a manner that reflects their values and convey these values effectively, followers' cooperation and identification with leaders' goals does not necessarily follow" (p. 460). Eagly argues for a notion of "relational authenticity"; this differs from traditional authentic leadership theory as it does not assume followers simply accept that the values revealed and promoted by their leaders advance the interests of the

group or organisation that they lead. In conceptualising relational authenticity, Eagly draws attention to the fact that values are often contested: "[W]hen the values of leaders and followers are incongruent, a leader must engage in negotiation and persuasion that may result in greater acceptance of the leader's agenda but may also include some conformity by the leader to followers' construals of community interests" (p. 461). Consequently, even when leaders have clear and consistent moral values which they demonstrate to others, it does not necessarily follow that they become "efficacious" leaders without adopting some compromises with the perceptions and positions of followers.

Whilst the evidence presented in Eagly's book is drawn from a range of different sources, the notion of relational authenticity has not been empirically tested so care should be taken in drawing too many strong conclusions about this concept. However, this work helpfully draws attention to the dialogic nature of the meaning of leadership and the influences which followers and the institutional setting might have on not only who might become a leader within that context but then might also shape what the individual becomes. If the self is social and episodic, as we suggested in Chapter 3, individuals might create their identity in role in accordance with the understandings and values associated with leadership within that setting.

Authenticity, emotion and leadership

As we have already suggested, a great deal of the authentic leadership literature has much in common with charismatic/transformational model of leadership. This is particularly the case in considering the role of followers. Drawing on concepts such as "trust, hope, emotion, identification", various authors have sought to describe the "processes by which authentic leaders exert their influence on followers' attitudes and behaviors" (Avolio *et al.*, 2004a: 801). On this view, leaders influence followers, but this influence is uni-directional rather than mutually constitutive; "leaders who are not only true to themselves, but lead others by helping them to likewise achieve authenticity" (Gardner *et al.*, 2005: 344).

At the same time, the authentic leadership literature does provide a welcome focus on the importance of emotion. As we have suggested throughout this book, much of the more influential leadership theories have not paid sufficient attention to the critical role that the management of emotion plays in leadership processes (or where emotion has been considered it is mostly as a negative factor which impairs or

distorts an individual's judgement, see Michie & Gooty, 2005). In considering authentic leaders and their links to followers, emotion is considered as a crucial component by a range of theorists. For example, Ilies *et al.* (2005) seek to explore leader-follower outcomes in terms of eudaemonic well-being.

This work draws on Waterman's (1993) description of eudaemonia as occurring when one feels intensive involvement, special fit with an activity and intensely alive. As Ilies *et al.* (2005: 375) define it, "eudaemonia occurs when one assumes introspective reflection upon one's values and reasoned choices for engagement in specific activities, and not only hedonic motivation". In the model proposed by Ilies and colleagues, authentic leaders who have eudaemonic well-being are able to influence follower eudaemonic well-being (and vice-versa, although there is less detail on these processes in this review). Eudaemonic well-being, then, is about much more than just directing or influencing individuals through vision or culture, but incorporates interventions in aspects of the identities of individuals and their emotions in terms of positive self-concepts and perspectives of past, present and future relationships and behaviours. Such an impact would constitute a powerful contribution to organisational sensemaking and to followers committing themselves to a particular course of action in a specific situation.

Authenticity: no paradox and no model

These types of studies around authenticity have tended to be dominated by psychological modelling, saying much about individual concepts and perspectives of "self", but little about the contexts and settings within which these identities are enacted and their implications. Further, not only do these sorts of models of leadership tend to focus on internal cognitive factors, but also set the individual leader apart from followers. There is a danger that, if uncritically accepted, this approach to leadership creates an image of heroic individuals who are self-sacrificing and altruistic, who have somehow managed to attain a position of perfect self-knowledge and are able to lift others to this higher state. This essentially reproduces a number of the difficulties with notions of leadership which we raised in Chapter 2, albeit with an added "goodness" added to leaders' core value to overcome some of the ethical failings of the charismatic and transformational approaches which have become apparent in recent years.

Overall, there is much of interest within the authentic leadership literature which resonates with the framework set out in this text, in particular the focus on the creation of emotional tone through the performance of leadership. However, we are ultimately un-persuaded that there is a paradox in suggesting that authenticity can be performed and unconvinced that the "authentic" account constitutes a distinct theory of leadership.

Section 5

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11

Epilogue: Theory and Research in the Performative Theory of Leadership

Beyond sensemaking …

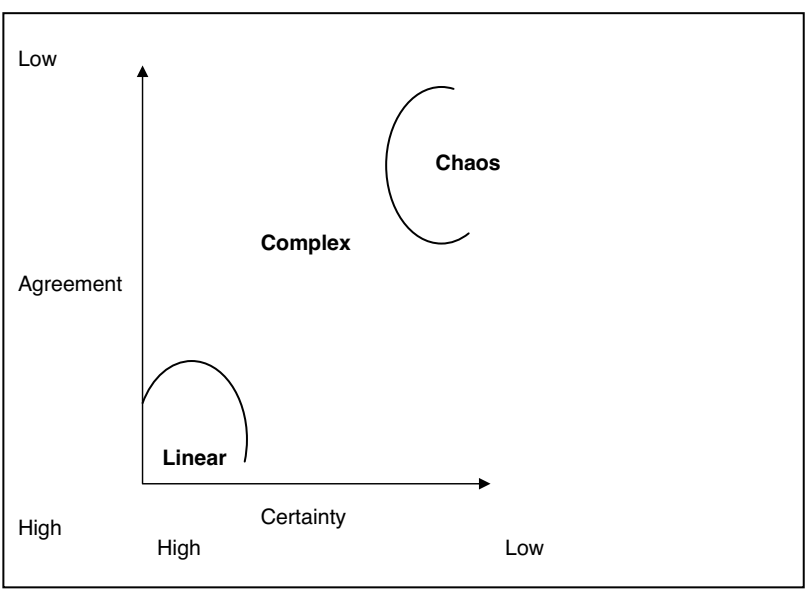
We noted in the Prologue that we are hesitant about suggesting that what we have sketched out here is a new theory of leadership. We are by no means convinced that the world would be a better place for having yet another one; furthermore, as we have shown, the idea of leaders as performers is hardly novel. Nonetheless, the performative perspective does seem to make a distinct contribution to the sensemaking school of leadership, building on its foundations and acknowledging its significance whilst seeking to address some of its shortfalls. In summarising where we think our account moves beyond sensemaking, we focus on the work of Keith Grint simply because he is the most insightful and influential of the writers in this "tradition" (of which we very much consider ourselves a part).

Perhaps most importantly, performativity draws attention to the limitations of the notion that the shaping of the sensemaking of others is the key activity of leaders. If the acceptance of the authority and the commitment to action by subordinates, superordinates and peers is the purpose of the leadership performance, then whilst sensemaking by organisational leaders may play a significant role in producing audience commitment to a course of action, it is not in itself sufficient to prompt that commitment; at best it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. There are all sorts of people who seek to shape our sensemaking every day of our lives, but few of them we would consider leaders. The important dimension of sensemaking in the context of the performance of leadership is that it is undertaken by someone with a claim to authority who wishes to demonstrate the legitimacy and legibility of that authority in seeking such commitment. This argument

suggests that Grint's (2005a) attempt to distinguish leadership from management and command (see Chapter 4) may be flawed. On our account, a leader may choose – or be required – to perform his or her authority in any three of these settings.

In his subsequent book on leadership, management and command, Grint (2008) makes more explicit the link between leadership, complexity theory and his so-called "wicked problem": "there is no unilinear solution, moreover, there is no 'stopping point', it is novel, and any apparent 'solution' more often generates other 'problems'" (p. 11). There is an extensive literature on the implications of complexity theory for organisations (see Sweeney, 2005 for an introduction) which we do not have time to explore within this text. Here, it is most relevant to note that Grint does suggest – unlike other writers in the sensemaking school – a generic account of context. His typology of problems, power and authority (again, see Chapter 4) does just that; his account of the appropriate context for leadership (as opposed to command and management) combines high uncertainty about solution with high requirement for collaborative resolution. In so doing, he is echoing the agreement/certainty matrix of Stacey (1999) – see

Figure 11.1 Stacey's agreement/certainty matrix



(reproduced from Stacey, 1999)

Figure 11.1 – where Grint's formulation of leadership operates in the zone of low agreement and low certainty where complexity theory holds sway; "build networks, enhance communication, work collectively and allow direction to emerge are the guiding principles here" (Sweeney, 2005: 150; drawing on Wheatley, 2001). The recommendation of Grint – "ask the right questions rather than provide the right answers" (p. 11) – is very much in keeping with the prescriptions of the writers on organisational complexity. In contrast, high agreement and high certainty is described as the zone of linearity.

Of course, this is a very specific account of context with which we think has two fundamental weaknesses. Firstly, it tells us more about the nature of the challenges faced by organisations than about the organisations themselves; presumably any organisation could find itself in the realms of linearity, complexity and chaos at different times (or, indeed, at the same time for different problems). Secondly, its focus on leadership as sensemaking leads it to suggest that it is only present in the context of complex settings. Our focus on leaders' sensemaking as a means to ensuring commitment – and not as an end in itself – suggests that it can be present in all three settings; that is, leadership may be enacted in providing answers and organising processes as much as in asking questions. Of course, we would also argue that it can also be present in many more settings besides these three.

Grint recognises the importance of authority – three forms of power, after all, form one axis of his matrix – and that "legitimate authority depends upon a persuasive rendition of the context and a persuasive display of the appropriate authority style" (2008: 15). However, it seems to us that the first of these two activities – the rendition of the context – potentially overstates the power of the leader in any setting. It is entirely plausible to argue that a leader may frame – in Goffman's terms – a problem for others such that certain courses of action and thus certain types of authority are made more legible and legitimate. Nevertheless, such framing typically takes place within a context rather than constructing it (as the examples in Grint's earlier paper demonstrate). This distinction; it draws attention again to the importance of a robust theory of context which enables us to analyse the basis and the impact of the chosen frame. Grint's (2005a) example of Blair's approach to the Iraq war illustrates this point nicely; whilst he could frame the WMD issue as critical in the short term in order to persuade parliament to support the invasion, it did not significantly alter the context within which the subsequent lack of WMDs was judged in the medium term. We have frequently returned in this

book to the importance of the temporal dimension of leadership, where performances today are judged in the light of those given in the past.

Furthermore, whilst Blair's advocacy for the invasion of Iraq was most certainly an example of leadership – where personal and positional authority was enacted to encourage commitment – his approach was accompanied by some of the more familiar managerial approaches to achieve a parliamentary majority; the presence of leadership is again shown to be one – but not the only – factor that explains why individuals commit themselves to a particular course of action in a specific situation. The performance of the appropriate authority style – in Grint's terms – is a technique for gaining commitment that may be used alongside other techniques by managers just as much as by politicians, generals etc.

Of course, Grint is very aware of the constraints of context on leaders' performances, "the social discourses within which they operate. In other words, leaders cannot invent a completely new world or identity but are constrained by the language, the customs, the social mores, the dress codes, and so on with which we all operate" (2005b: 10). Perhaps the most significant difference between our account of leadership and that of other exponents of the sensemaking model is the theory of context – of the limited variety of social discourses – derived from neo-Durkheimian institutional theory. We made our approach to this theory – as a heuristic device – clear in Chapter 1. Nonetheless, we hope we have shown its utility in illustrating the styles of performing authority that may be seen as legible and legitimate in different organisational contexts. We also hope to have demonstrated that our adoption of this institutional framework neither overlooks the importance of agency nor suggests determinism within which change is impossible.

At the same time, and in keeping with Grint, we hope we have shown that the symbolic and emotional aspects of leaders' performances are as at least as important as the instrumental and the rational (where, of course, the most efficacious balance will be specific to the organisational setting within which the performance takes place). Furthermore, the central component of the performance may be the creation of the collective mood within which the desired commitment to action may take place. Much of our text – especially Section 2 – is given over to the techniques through which leaders do or could shape the emotional responses of those from whom they wish to gain commitment; we hope that we have provided compelling examples drawn

from a range existing sources and can only regret the lack of empirical research into the performances of leaders.

We want to return again – albeit briefly – to the transformational trope. Whilst we find implausible its suggestion that the words and actions of leaders alone can transform the commitment of either followers or organisations in the absence of other interventions and we are suspicious of is essentialist tendencies, we acknowledge that there are transformations in such commitment that leaders can achieve through deploying some of the approaches that it highlights in order to make authority more legitimate and legible. As with all previous theories, therefore, it has made a lasting contribution to the debate.

This book also seeks to provide a number of arguments to underline that commitment is rarely, if ever, uniform across organisations, and that identifiable communities of interest both shape and are shaped by the responses of individuals. Furthermore, these communities of interest within organisational audiences may each represent a particular way of organising as described by NDIT, an argument that provides both some consistency and some limits to the range of communities of interest that may be present in such audiences.

Finally, the tentative excursion in Chapter 8 into the aesthetics of leadership – the idea that leaders' emotional impact may be enhanced by exemplifying what are considered to be the desirable attributes of leadership in a particular organisational context – represents another of the potential lines of enquiry that result from taking the performance of leadership seriously. Once again, we would agree that work in the transformational tradition has served to articulate these attributes for specific sectors at a particular point in time; it would be our contention that more research is required to establish how these evolve within, and vary between, institutional settings. It is perhaps now time to move onto the outstanding research questions that arise from our work.

Researching performance

We have sought to establish that leadership can either be viewed as literally a performance, drawing attention to the more formal rituals of organisational life, or metaphorically a performance, highlighting the less formal relationships and interactions of organisational life. Whichever frame is adopted, it has been argued that the institutional context sets parameters around the forms of ritual and forms of (re)-iteration, respectively, that will be plausible. Whilst we have attempted to

draw on examples from the extant literature to illustrate our points, we acknowledge that our framework still lacks an extensive empirical basis. Most books by academics end with a call for more research; this text is no exception (and draws on Peck *et al.*, 2009, in so doing).

In relation to leadership "is" performance, the central research question seems to concern ways of characterising the organisational settings in which ritual performances take place and the opportunities and constraints these settings determine; that is, what sorts of more formal performances can be given in which settings and to what effect? Furthermore, any account not only has to explore the manner in which such performances serve to uphold existing institutional arrangements but also the potential that they hold for change (and, again, in which circumstances).

In terms of leadership "as" performance, whilst explicitly recognising the constraints that the predominant institutional forms engender, this aspect of the research would seek to explore the performative repertoires – the nature of the speech, text and action – with which individual leaders attempt to (re)-cite and (re)-iterate the images and stories that are deployed to create or maintain the commitment of those around them. In other words, the research would focus on the interventions over time of leaders in the individual and collective cognitive and emotional responses of peers and subordinates and the consequences that these have for the capacity and willingness of these colleagues to pursue the agenda of the leader.

In both cases, any research may benefit from deploying the second of our two frameworks – enactment, narrative and audience – to explore and report the performance of leaders.

Finally, we look forward to the comments of academics and managers alike to the ideas examined in this book; we know that we have on occasions been robust, whilst always hopefully respectful, in our challenges to the work of others and we trust that peers will respond in a similar spirit. We recognise that this account is by no means the final word on the topic of performing leadership. Neither will leadership performance be the last (almost) theory of leadership; indeed, we are confident there will be another one along any minute now …

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