WISDOM MANAGEMENT:

TENSIONS BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IN PRACTICE

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Wisdom is a little discussed and poorly understood human faculty in the dominant discourse that pervades today's management practices (Brague 2003; McKenna et al. 2000). Modern managerial discourse is very much a product of a dominant discourse characterised by the ideologies of neo-liberalism, including rational managerialism, and of positivist science incorporating methodological reductionism. We call this technocratic discourse (McKenna et al. 2000), and argue that it privileges rational scientific method and technical knowledge in managerial problem-solving. It is not surprising that managing and utilizing knowledge has been theorised largely within this hegemonic technocratic discourse.

Nonetheless, it is true that subjective and imaginative or transcendent mental processes, which we argue are critical to managerial wisdom and success, do occur in management theory and practice. It is also true that there is a considerable body of research in the sociology of science that demonstrates the importance and unavoidability of these 'other' forms of intellection in the practice of innovative science (Kuhn 1970). Why is it, then, that wisdom, the highest form of knowing, is not accorded the same status as rational, objective knowledge in management science? Although not expressly referring to these ideological and discursive features of contemporary managerial discourse, management theorists such as Mintzberg (2000) and Srivastva et al (1998) have criticised the lack of wisdom-based theory and practice in contemporary orthodox management. Nonetheless, a small number of

management researchers have attempted to build questions about wisdom into their research on, for example, management practices and organisational learning (cf. Bierly et al. 2000; Galvin 1996).

Given this marginalised position for wisdom in management theory and practice, it was significant that a management report entitled *The Getting and Keeping of Wisdom: Inter-Generational Knowledge Transfer in a Changing Public Service* (Hammer 2002) [TGKW] was written for the Canadian Public Service. This document was selected for analysis because it is the only such document we know of that is explicitly concerned with wisdom management in a large organisation. We evaluate its content according to a set of wisdom principles and by computer-assisted text analysis. To do this we firstly outline how these principles were derived from research into the psychology of wisdom (Baltes et al. 2003; Baltes et al. 1990; Baltes et al. 2000b; Baltes et al. 1995; Staudinger et al. 1997; Sternberg 1990a; Sternberg 1990b), and a philosophical survey of the Aristotelian practical wisdom tradition (McKenna 2005; Rooney et al. 2005a; Rooney et al. forthcoming; Rooney et al. 2004). To quickly summarise, let us simply say that wisdom is that which: coordinates knowledge and judgments about the "fundamental pragmatics of life" around such properties as: (1) strategies and goals involving the conduct and meaning of life; (2) limits of knowledge and uncertainties of the world; (3) excellence of judgment and advice; (4) knowledge with extraordinary scope, depth, and balance; (5) search for a perfect synergy of mind and character; and (6) balancing the good or well-being of oneself and that of others (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, p. 132). Such a characterisation, then, implies that wisdom includes both rational (scientific) intellectual practices and 'other' more transcendent and unscrutinizable (tacit) mental processes like imagination, intuition, creativity and so on. Fundamental to our theorisation of

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wisdom is a commitment to ethical behaviour, consistent with its Aristotelian (secular) and Thomistic (religious) European origins.

Wise or unwise management theory and practice can be understood as a function of discourse. From a discourse perspective we assert that wisdom is subordinate to and often absent from the dominant managerial discourse that is rational, economistic and technocratic (this incorporates its ideological dimension). This is not surprising as managerialist discourse does not easily accommodate the transcendent (imaginative, creative and intersubjective) and humane (ethical) defining components of wisdom. Such an incapacity is significant for two reasons. Firstly, as discourse shapes the assumptions and other beliefs that are valorised, marginalised, or occluded in organizational life, the degree of its discursive presence would indicate the level of its practice (Mumby et al. 1997; Oswick et al. 1997; Taylor et al. 2000, p. 96) because discourse is "constitutive of socio-organizational practice" (Reed 1998, p. 195). Secondly, from the knowledge perspective, the degree to which wisdom is incorporated in a theory of organisational knowledge will indicate the completeness of such a theory in understanding the logic of knowledge-related processes in organizations, and the links between these processes and power (see, for example, Heracleous 2001) and values.

These issues of knowledge, power, and values implicit in the discourse-based concept of wisdom are explored in the Canadian Government's report (*TGKW*), which we consider as a discursive artefact. This report is discursively evaluated using as criteria principles of wisdom derived from psychology and philosophy. In particular,

we wish to determine the extent to which the document is able to resist the limiting isomorphic tendencies of the dominant discourse[1].

Prior to that analysis, however, we make two observations: the first concerns the circumstances of the document's production, the second is the interdiscursive adoption of technocratic language within the document. The first issue is simply to note that the context of the document's production, namely the drain of senior management from the public service because of a work ethic to which they are expected to "psychically accommodate" (Casey 1999, p. 164) . However, this heavy workload expectation is contradictory to these public servants' desire to enhance their quality of life, including life-work balance (stated in Section 3.3). Thus the work-life imbalance is taken as a given. Yet "balance" is a crucial part of wisdom. Sternberg (1998), for example, argues that management is wise to the extent that it uses a blend of intelligence, creativity, experience, and virtue to achieve a common good through balancing intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal organizational / institutional / spiritual) interests over both the short and long terms.

The second concern is the potential reification of wisdom into a commodity that can be unproblematically objectified and "transferred" (cf. Graham and Rooney 2001), rather than as a complex and fluid set of socially (re)constructed values, practices, and cognitions that infuse the dynamics and interpersonal relations of an organisation. Such a problem is inherent in a technocratic discourse that speaks of "human capital" and "knowledge management" because such noun-phrases draw

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[1] As discursive structures place limits on thought and action by creating fixed, ontological categories that become taken for granted as being "true", they are not contested and they do not need to be argued for. Thus an orthodoxy develops that is sustained by mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Heracleous (2001) argues that deep institutional structures can be seen as discursive structures that significantly contribute to shaping organizational discourses.

DiMaggio, P., and Powell, W. "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," American Sociological Review (48) 1983, pp 147-160.

interdiscursively on particular economistic and managerial discourses that each carry their own privileged values and taken-for-granted assumptions about what is preferable, valuable and feasible. More specifically, we mean that a discourse that represents human beings as "human capital" is explicitly anti-humanist because humans are factored into equations and calculations in the same manner as physical capital: it is therefore contrary to the fundamental humanity of wisdom. Now, while this technocratic terminology may be useful in actuarially identifying potential shortages of experienced people (the impetus for the report), clearly it can also be used in technocratically rational ways to justify, for example, laying off staff to impress financial markets. Thus, in taking a wisdom approach one needs to be mindful not to carry the somewhat anti-humanist discursive assumptions that come with the kind of noun-phrase identified here.

This empirical paper provides a rare opportunity to analyse an organisational document that explicitly seeks to enhance organisational wisdom. Moreover, we point out that the report does not seek to construct wisdom management from a knowledge management systems (or technology) based perspective. Rather, it seeks to describe a non-technological, Human Resource Management (HRM) approach to wisdom management.

METHOD

Our analysis is in two parts. In the first part, we use computer-assisted text analysis of our data to discover, using a corpus-based approach, the dominant concepts of the document and how they relate to each other. In the second part, we evaluate the concept of wisdom in terms of nine characteristics of wisdom that we have devised.

Computer Assisted Text Analysis

The data analysed in this study come from the document, *The Getting and Keeping of Wisdom: Inter-Generational Knowledge Transfer in a Changing Public Service* (Hammer 2002), which assesses the possibility and benefits of introducing wisdom management into the Canadian Public Service. The corpus was analysed using Leximancer, which is a computer assisted text (content) analysis application that employs a machine-learning technique. The machine-learning process learns in a grounded fashion what the main concepts in a corpus are and how they relate to each other. Content analysis can be done as either conceptual (thematic) analysis or relational (semantic) analysis. Leximancer does both, identifying concepts in the corpus and how they interrelate. In identifying concepts and showing how they interrelate, Leximancer uses word frequency and co-occurrence counts as its basic data. Leximancer builds its analysis by using the frequency data and data about the co-occurrence of concepts to produce a concept co-occurrence matrix. Once a concept has been identified, Leximancer then builds a thesaurus of words that are closely related to the concept, thus giving the concept its semantic or definitional content.

A picture of the relational (semantic context) characteristics of the concepts is created in two important ways. First, data is created relating to the direct co-occurrence of concepts. Direct links between concepts are measured establishing the strength of relations between concepts. The more times a concept occurs directly with another, the stronger the relationship. Second, a more complex picture emerges when data about what is semantically related to a concept is related to other concepts and their co-occurring words. Thus Leximancer can compare a concepts' thesaurus with other concepts' thesauri. In this way, indirect links between concepts are accounted for, meaning that a significant semantic relationship can exist between concepts even when there are only indirect relationships between them. Overall, then, Leximancer

rank-orders concepts, and tells the investigator about the strength of association and semantic similarity between concepts.

Finally, Leximancer stochastically calculates a map of the concepts in the corpus. This visualisation technique enables the investigator to see, in a global representation, what are the important concepts in the corpus and relationships between these concepts. Hence, concepts that are directly related but that are not necessarily strongly semantically linked can be far apart on the concept map while concepts that are strongly semantically related will be close to each other on the concept map. Therefore, concepts that occur in very similar semantic contexts tend to form clusters. The map is then used by the investigator to present an overall representation of the corpus and to guide interpretation.

The investigator can also 'drill' down through a concept, into its thesaurus of words, and then directly into the chunks of text where those concepts and words are found. This allows the investigator to easily interrogate the text and interpret it in light of his or her own reading of the corpus and to apply various linguistic analytical techniques such as lexico-grammatical analysis.

An important feature of this kind of analysis is its reliability. Leximancer addresses reliability in two ways: stability and reproducibility. Stability in Leximancer is equivalent to intercoder reliability. That is, the automated and deterministic machine-learning phase will be highly consistent no matter how many times a corpus is processed and reprocessed (coded and recoded) by the application. It can therefore be said that Leximancer has a high level of coding stability. Leximancer's reproducibility is seen in its consistency in classifying text given the same coding scheme. Consistent classifying manifests in a consistently constructed stochastic concept map. In other words, if the map is calculated and recalculated a number of

times the researcher can inspect each new map for its consistency with previous maps. If maps are dissimilar the researcher can alter any of the computational criteria being applied to the corpus in an endeavour to make the map consistently reproducible. Leximancer produced highly stable maps for this study.

Criterion-based Evaluation of Wisdom

This part of the analysis evaluates the document's approach to wisdom in terms of nine principles of practical wisdom. This is a reflexive approach similar to that found in grounded theory and action research processes. In this case our own defining characteristics of wisdom as well as the working definition of wisdom in the document are tested relative to each other (cf. Glaser et al. 1967; McNiff 2000; Strauss et al. 1990).

Leximancer Analysis

Figure 1 maps the most important themes (areas within the circles) and concepts (words on the map). There are four major themes in the text, (1) retirement, (2) senior, (3) organization, and (4) Public Service (Ps).
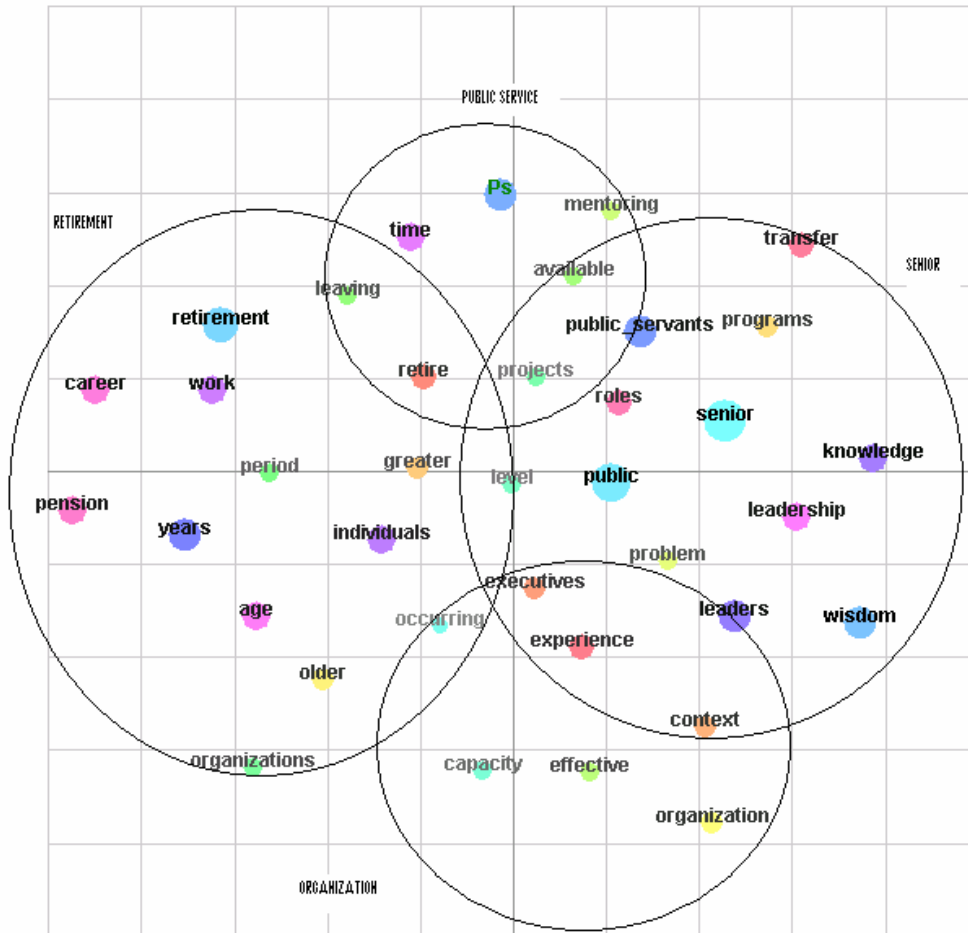
Figure 1: Map of important themes and concepts

Taking each theme in turn we see that retirement [the Western circle] covers a semantic terrain that links concepts such as age, years, pension, leaving, and older. Clearly the concern is that older workers are leaving the public service. Why this is a problem is demonstrated in the Senior theme's [the Eastern circle] conceptual terrain. Here concepts such as leadership, experience, wisdom, and public are in the forefront. These concepts are in the forefront because the departure of older and senior public servants to (early) retirement is draining the service of good leaders who have the wisdom, knowledge and experience with which to guide and supervise the bureaucracy. The effects of this are made evident in the organization and public service themes where we see that mentoring, experience, and effectiveness capacities are being lessened by retirement, with the effect that being of service to the public is

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compromised. This interpretation is supported by the rank ordered list of concepts in the text (Appendix).[2]

Functional and Non-Functional Values

We now more closely analyse some of the key concepts shown on the map and explore examples of text where concept co-occurrences can highlight how the documents author situates wisdom within managerial concerns to characterise the rhetorical moves employed to make his case. Concept co-occurrences selected for this purpose are all identified by Leximancer as important and address a range of managerial concerns. The concept co-occurrences we use are Senior and Public; Wisdom and Knowledge; Wisdom and Organization; Wisdom and Projects; Wisdom and Time; Wisdom and Roles; and Wisdom and Context.

Our following discourse analysis focuses on an examination of the causes for the concern in the Canadian Public Service about the wisdom drain and which have created the imperative for adopting wisdom management. In doing this we highlight that these concerns are linked to a set of functionalist (and instrumental) imperatives that are suggestive of technocratic values.

We now textually analyse 21 excerpts that occur in seven separate conceptual co-occurrences. We firstly provide the 21 excerpts with highlighted words and phrases (Table 1). These highlighted words are then classified according to whether they are functional / instrumental or not. Overwhelmingly, the excerpts identify wisdom in a functional or instrumental way.

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[2] The top fifteen most frequently occurring concepts in the document are; senior, wisdom, retirement, public, knowledge, public service, years, career, leaders, work, pension, time, leadership, public servants, and age.

Senior and Public	
1.	It [the paper] further introduces the notion of wisdom as an important characteristic of **seasoned and strategic leaders** and a **corporate resource** that can be fostered, retained and disseminated, as well as lost to departures.
2.	Changes in who is available, willing, and suitably qualified are set against the backdrop of historical and **legal/regulatory changes** in what is expected of the public service and public servants in roles of **responsibility and public accountability**.
3.	Such **expectations** exist on the part of both the **political leadership and the public it serves**. There is an increasing need for leaders and decision-makers in the public service to function in a **values-based way**.
4.	Addressing these three issues effectively requires identifying what the drivers of departure and retention in senior public servants are, identifying what it is about these individuals (or at least about some of them) that provides **added value to the PS** at this time, and how we could go about retaining and spreading **what it is that we value about them**.
5.	As Kieran (2001) has noted, relative to their non-public sector age-mates, public servants typically have the types of pension packages which facilitate their earlier departure, increasing the **need** by the public sector to **fill upper level positions, compared to the private sector.**
Wisdom and Knowledge	
6.	Both empirical research, and the philosophical and religious literature, identify the wise individual as someone who **knows a lot**, prefers to **view problems from a broader long-term perspective**, **sees things in context**, is **flexible** in adopting **multiple perspectives of multiple stakeholders**, recognizes the **uncertainty of life** and **limits of their knowledge**, and is prepared to be tentative or **flexible in the kinds of solutions** they offer, **without being narrow in focus** or **unprepared for eventualities** (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Part of this is not very different from what is normally meant by "intelligent" or knowledgeable, something **easily identifiable** at any age and **easily selected for** by traditional means. The distinguishing aspects are how wise individuals frame and solve problems.
7.	One would expect wisdom to increase with age, given both the traditional association with age, and the role of accrued world knowledge and experience. On the other hand, as a trait related to stable personality traits, **wisdom should remain fairly stable** across age and would not be expected to occur or accrue simply because of age. Research supports both views.
8.	"Knowledge" is viewed as having a loftier status than "information" insomuch as it **incorporates evaluative and connective processes** which help to **form plans** rather than just fill in the gaps in details of plans already formed. Though such knowledge is important, **organizations also accumulate perspectives, values, missions, and a history, all occurring within a shifting context**. Boal and Hooijberg (2001) argue that as the economic, demographic, legal, and

	cultural contexts within which organizations operate change, **the capacity to know enough about the organization, its stakeholders, and its contexts**, is paramount in leaders being able to **make effective, appropriate, and timely decisions**
9.	What assists leaders, then, is not so much access to the documented history or procedures of the organization (though these matter), but a **deeper and broader knowledge of the how and why all of these things are linked**. The **business of an organization** can be facilitated by knowledge management, but the leadership of the organization requires a **higher order of knowledge acquisition and transfer**, wherein the values, perspectives, ethics, and dialectics from different parts of the organization and external stakeholders are readily available to decisionmakers - what one might term wisdom management.
Wisdom and Organisation	
10.	In most of these views of leadership, wisdom plays a role in **effective strategic decision-making**, and in **interpersonal processes** crucial to effective leadership. Korac-Kakabadse, et al. (2001) propose that wisdom informs the **visioning** required of leaders, the use and content of **dialogue**, and the **maintenance of the psychological contract** between leaders and followers. Jacques and Clement (1991) see the **perspective-taking capacity of wisdom** as enhancing the **strategic thinking capabilities of executives**, and their **capacity to anticipate reactions of others**.
11.	Kuhnert (2001) echoes this view, suggesting that the contemporary **transformational leader** must be able **convey values to others** in the organization, and a**ppeal to their values to motivate organizational change and direction**. Leaders must also be **open to learning** and **admitting that they don't know everything**. Pfeffer (2001) identifies such an "attitude of wisdom" as essential to a learning organization.
12.	Kilburg (2000) views productive interactions between managers and others as depending upon the **self-restraint, personal and interpersonal insight** which wisdom provides. All of these dimensions - strategic thinking and reasoning, visioning and being able to take the long view, being able to effectively dialogue with others and engage them, and effective self-management - are viewed as part and parcel of what wisdom means in the **managerial or leader context.**
13.	What does an organization that strives to retain and spread wisdom among its leaders **stand to gain**? Integrating both the psychological and leadership literature, one would anticipate that the wiser leader is one that, among other things: · · **can provide useful advice** about a variety of matters, perhaps **framing a problem or issue** so that others think about it more cooperatively or productively; **acts prudently**, clearly **distinguishes between long-range goals, and the processes used** to attain them, and can be **trusted to act in the best interests** of the organization, despite personal feelings; can **think in terms of the broader context** that the organization operates in; **deals with people well**, readily **earns their trust**, and can **develop and mentor staff**; values and taps their organizational experience, but is **open to new ideas** and perspectives, whether coming from colleagues or other stakeholders.
Wisdom and Projects	

14.	The practical problem that accompanies this is not only **how to do it quickly** but how to do it in a way that avoids bitterness or competition. How do we **manage and retain the insights of senior public servants** after they retire?
15.	Facilitating mentoring may well imply **job redesign and time** specifically allocated for such activities, on the part of both senior mentors and developing leaders, conceivably built into **performance agreements**. Mentor-mentee relationships need not be confined exclusively to a kind of confidante interaction. Given that the wisdom is in the **information seeking and weighting of priorities in the doing itself, co-leadership of projects** is also a useful way of acquiring the thought processes and perspectives of wise leaders.
Wisdom and Time	
16.	A broader time frame for whoever is doing the transfer also permits them to **become invested in the role** and develop a style that works for them. How do we get the organizational culture to value wisdom more?
17.	The **perceived value** of managerial wisdom in PS decision-making, and especially acquiring it, will **depend on how much time** (and by extension importance) **is perceived to be allocated** to it.
18.	Allocating time for soon-to-depart staff to transfer what they know to incoming replacements is also difficult, whether because the departing individual has too much to attend to before leaving an already understaffed unit or because their replacement will not be in place to benefit from any overlap. Making it important requires **providing a framework** that permits the individual leader to make it important.
19.	It is not simply the potential loss of executive and corporate wisdom that is of concern, but the **imminent need** for more of it at a time when it may be in **shorter supply**. … . It also involves going out in search of wisdom when **recruiting or selecting for promotion**, and in **providing productive opportunities** for managerial and leadership wisdom to flourish on its own, whether in place or on assignment.
Wisdom and Roles	
20.	If knowledge transfer is a high priority, then **earlier identification is preferred**, so as to make **optimum use** of such individuals as a **resource**. Earlier identification also **potentiates greater personal investment** in the role prior to actual retirement (i.e., no "lame duck" roles), and enhanced possibilities for re-attracting such individuals following departure.
Wisdom and Context	
21.	Olfshski and Cutchin (2001) describe what they refer to as **"tailored programs"** as a way to facilitate higher-order leadership skills.

Table 1: Textual Excerpts in Concept Areas

Given that the document addresses a practical problem, namely how to retain their senior public servants' expertise, it is, of course, likely to be oriented in a

functional way. However, of significance here is how wise leaders are understood in a public service context and what inherent concept of wisdom is implied in the suggested solution. Outlined below is a brief textual analysis of the twenty-one excerpts. The analysis comprises a search for discursive markers, which may be literal or metaphorical (Grant et al. 1996). By discursive markers we mean the usual discourse from which certain words or phrases are drawn. [Bolded words are discursive markers. The bracket indicates the excerpt from which the reference is taken].

Wise leaders are seen as "a **corporate resource"** [1]. Given this economistic metaphor, the author unsurprisingly asks what **stand[s] to gain** [13] from retaining and spreading wisdom among its leaders. The need for wise leadership arises within the contextual "backdrop of historical and **legal/regulatory changes** … in roles of **responsibility and public accountability**." [2] In other words, the public service is legally obliged to be publicly accountable (although this has always been the case in a Westminster system, it appears that this has been rediscovered and renamed, e.g. "transparency", "open government"). At a time when significant numbers of experienced public servants are retiring (early) there is an "**imminent need** for more [wisdom] … at a time when it may be in **shorter supply**" [19], which maintains the economistic discourse. This discourse is further developed by the claim that wisdom "provides **added value to the PS"** [4]. This would appear to be because applied wisdom is needed primarily to

Plan: "**evaluative and connective processes** which help to **form plans"** [8]

Decide: "being able to **make effective, appropriate, and timely decisions" [8]**

Be Strategic: "wisdom plays a role in **effective strategic decision-making"** [10]; the **perspective-taking capacity of wisdom** as enhancing the **strategic**

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thinking capabilities of executives [10]; "their **capacity to anticipate**

reactions of others." [10]

Wisdom in senior public servants is clearly based on their knowledge:

organizations also accumulate perspectives, values, missions, and a history,

all occurring within a shifting context. [As organizations change] **the**

capacity to know enough about the organization, its stakeholders, and its

contexts [8], is paramount in leaders

Knowing the documented history or procedures of the organization is seen to be

inadequate because there is a need to "access … a **deeper and broader knowledge of**

the how and why all of these things are linked."[9] Wise leaders require "a **higher**

order of knowledge acquisition and transfer." [9] In a Learning Organisation,

however, wise managers "must also be **open to learning** and **admitting that they**

don't know everything" [11].

However, moving outside the realm of knowledge and cognition, we are told

that wise leaders are able to enhance "**interpersonal processes**" [10]; effectively

communicate ("use and content of **dialogue**"); and maintain the **"psychological**

contract between leaders and followers" [10]. Wise leaders in their relations with

subordinates display "**self-restraint, personal and interpersonal insight**" [11].

Although, wise managers are assumed to have high personal values, they appear to be

only in the context of organizational transformation:

"the contemporary **transformational leader** must be able **convey values to**

others in the organization" [11];

"and a**ppeal to their values to motivate organizational change and**

direction." [11]

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Gathering and retaining wisdom in the public service is represented primarily as an exercise in organisational HRM because wise traits are "**easily identifiable** at any age and **easily selected for** by traditional means" [6]. It involves "going out in search of wisdom when **recruiting or selecting for promotion**, and in **providing productive opportunities**" [19] for people once they are recruited. Consistent with the economistic metaphor, "**earlier identification** [of wise people] **is preferred**, so as to make **optimum use** of such individuals as a **resource** [20]. The major concern in this document is "**how to do it quickly**" [14]. Then, having obtained wise people, the question of how to "**manage and retain the insights of senior public servants** after they retire" [14] arises. Suggested answers include **job redesign and time; co-leadership of projects;** "**performance agreements**" **[15] and "tailored programs" [21].**" The document acknowledges that the "**perceived value** of managerial wisdom … will **depend on how much time** … **is perceived to be allocated** to it" [17]. In other words, organisations must be prepared to display their commitment to wisdom through their use of the scarce commodity, time.

While acknowledging that the economistic tone of the document is at least in part because this is a document dealing with a practical problem, it is nevertheless important to identify the implications of the way in which the document understands applied wisdom because the philosophical suppositions underpinning this understanding will infuse organisational practice for better or worse. These understandings of wisdom draw on various discourses and so are interdiscursively entwined in the text (Bakhtin 1981; Bakhtin 1986; Fairclough 1995, p.199; Lemke 1995). As Lemke (1995) states, these interdiscursive relations "determine what sorts of discursive objects (entities, topics, processes) the discourse can construct or talk about' and 'define the relations of meaning among statements"; and, "tell us what the

alternative kinds of discourses are that can be formed in these ways and how they can be related to each other as being considered equivalent, incompatible, antithetical, etc." (p. 30).

In short, the discursive objects in *TGKW* are the discourses of economy, law, organisational change, and management practice. The discourse of economy is seen in the metaphors of corporate resource; gain; supply; added value. Law discourse links wisdom interdiscursively with public scrutiny of regulatory changes and public accountability. In terms of organisational change, it was noted wise managers' high personal values are seen as crucial to organizational transformation or change. Implied in this is the valorisation of change over stasis. Our analysis also showed that selecting and retaining wise people is considered to be relatively easy. This is because wisdom is understood exclusively as a psychological construct or "trait" (the document uses only psychological theorists) and not more broadly as a philosophical and ethical disposition. More importantly, the discourse is an 'internalist' discourse concerned about the internal workings of the public administrative organ, rather than how, using a wisdom theoretic, it could be seen as a provider of public service.

Absent from the document is a statement in support of virtue in its own right: that this is a worthy objective of the noble human. Also absent from the document was a statement about the role of the public sector in contemporary life. Given the dialectical attack by neo-liberal thinkers and elected governments on the public sector, it would seem important to state why a wisely led public sector is needed at all. One could argue, for example, that the role of the public sector is to enhance the lives of the citizenry, or to serve the public (hence a public service). These absences are filled primarily by managerial and technocratic (economy, law, regulation) discourses. As a result, the opportunity to produce a more humane document has been foregone.

While this discourse analysis demonstrates a technocratic bias in the data in terms of its justifications for and anticipated outcomes of doing wisdom management, the bias sits awkwardly with the theorization of wisdom presented in the document. We argue that this tension between theory and practice is a function of the difficulties involved in working outside the isomorphic influences of the dominant (technocratic) discourse.

CRITIQUE OF WISDOM CONCEPTS

To highlight this tension, we now shift from a text analysis to evaluate the document using the nine principles of wisdom devised by McKenna (2005). Significantly, the document understands wisdom as a form of knowledge as is implied in:

> What sorts of knowledge need to be transferred before they are lost,
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> and why is this knowledge important? No longer an ephemeral
>
> construct, within the leadership literature, *wisdom* has come to be
>
> viewed as a desirable and even essential characteristic of executive
>
> leaders (Hammer, 2002, p. 11: original italic emphasis).

Yet, our claim is that wisdom has to be seen not as a form of knowledge, because doing so renders wisdom (knowledge) as a set of reified notions that are only loosely connected to conduct or practice, rather than as a set of attributes and skills that allow people to use knowledge effectively and humanely, that is, as *a way of being*[3]. Pleasingly, Hammer sets out the characteristics of wisdom deemed relevant to maintaining effective decision-making in the Canadian senior public service (pp. 11-

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[3] Case and Gosling develop this notion more in their paper Case, P., and Gosling, J. "Wisdom of the Moment: Premodern Perspectives on Organizational Action," 'Wisdom, Ethics and Management' stream, 4th International Critical Management Studies Conference, 'Critique and Inclusivity., Judge Institute of Management, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK., 2005. They say "Lying at the heart of Socrates teaching, therefore, was a 'spirituality' that is neglected by many contemporary interpretations, leading Hadot (*ibid*., p.29) to conclude that Socrates' wisdom was practiced, 'above all by means of his way of being, by his way of life'.

13). His characteristics of wisdom are drawn from the recent psychological literature (Baltes et al. 2000a; Sternberg 1998). However, we argue that McKenna (2005) provides a fuller description of wisdom because it is drawn from a philosophical and psychological survey of the nature of practical wisdom. A significant benefit of incorporating the philosophical survey is that it represents ideas from a different discursive regime, one that is dissonant with technocratic values, and therefore ensures that ideas that have been closed off in contemporary discourse are nevertheless given the chance to be considered again. From this philosophical survey and psychological meta-analysis nine characteristics of wisdom are derived, which are listed in Table One (left-hand column). In this part of the analysis we demonstrate the concordance between the *TGKW* document and the analytical/evaluative framework we use and in the right-hand column are references taken from *Section 4: Wisdom and Leadership* of the document. This section is critical to *TGKW* in that it effectively defines what wisdom is taken to be by the document. We seek here to 'fit' the working definition of wisdom in the document to the evaluative framework. We do this to test for definitional completeness and omission.

Nine Wisdom Characteristics	*The Getting and Keeping of Wisdom Document*
1. Wisdom has a spiritual or metaphysical quality that does not bind it to the rules of reason.	
2. It evaluates the salience and truth-value of logical propositions when applying reason to decision-making.	
3. It acknowledges the sensory and visceral as important components of decision-making.	
4. The purpose of wisdom is virtuous action.	"*convey values* to others"; "a socially-conscious values-oriented approach"
5. It is prudent and practical, displaying a sensible worldliness.	"effective *strategic decision-making*"; "acts prudently"
6. Wisdom understands the contingency of life and circumstance, and the constructedness of phenomena in a spatio-temporal location, so is not reducible to method.	"open to learning and admitting that they don't know everything"
7. It respects and draws upon experience and tradition as a means of apprehending who and what we are.	"relevant experience"
8. It is able to clearly articulate judgments in an aesthetically pleasing way.	"[effective] *interpersonal processes*" "use and content of dialogue"
9. It is tolerant, borne of a natural affection for humanity.	"deals with people well, readily earns their trust, and can develop and mentor staff"

Table Two: Nine Wisdom Elements in *The Getting and Keeping of Wisdom*

[original italics used in quotations]

From this analysis, it can be determined which of the nine characteristics are evident or not. In this respect we see that characteristics #1, #2 and #3 are not explicit in the working definition of wisdom in the document.

Dealing first with the three characteristics missing in the document, we assert that the document would be more complete if it were to explicitly incorporate these three elements. Although most clearly associated with the religious understanding of wisdom from the Old Testament (Charles 1913/1973) and later from the Aristotelian theologian, Aquinas (1964), the spiritual and metaphysical nature of wisdom nonetheless is identified also by the contemporary wisdom psychologists referred to by Hammer (viz. Staudinger et al and Sternberg). In a business context we can think of the spiritual as a set of essential and pervading principles guiding us in living the good life. For example, virtue-based action is clearly acknowledged in the fourth characteristic. While not necessarily spiritual in the strict sense, the notion of a "metaheuristic" (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000) acknowledges that good judgement often requires that a person is not bound completely by the rules of reason. Taking this further, we argue that wisdom requires the capacity for intuitive ethical judgement and the ability to place oneself in an affective state that is conducive to having excellent immediate feelings of the right thing to do. Ideas of spirituality also speak to the notion that one should exercise judgement, choice and so on under the influence of a sense of empathetic caring (Code 1987; Rooney et al. 2005b; Slote 2003). This spiritual dimension also relates to the capacity for "moving beyond existing rules and being tolerant of ambiguous situations" (p. 129). This, according to Baltes and Staudinger, is one of the most salient predictors of wisdom.

The second characteristic not explicitly evident in the *TGKW* document is that wise people evaluate the salience and truth-value of logical propositions when

applying reason to decision-making. Whereas the first characteristic encourages wise people to think outside the bounds of rationality, the second characteristic acknowledges the importance of rational discussion, but encourages decision-makers to question the truth-value, reliability and justification of the underlying propositions and proposals. When Sternberg (1990a) asserts that sagacity, involves, among other things, "as much an attitude toward knowledge as knowledge itself" (p. 157), he is essentially suggesting that we need to question the epistemic basis of propositions. We would argue that this is especially so where propositions have become *doxa[4]*, or unquestioned assumptions.

The third missing characteristic that we suggest should be explicitly incorporated is that wise people acknowledge the sensory and visceral as important components of decision-making. We do not mean here that emotion should rule our judgement. Here we acknowledge the research in brain science and consciousness studies, as well as the emotional intelligence literature (See, for example, Ashkanasy 2003; Wade 1996), that supports the efficacy of 'gut' level sensitivity in making judgements in certain circumstances. Baltes and Staudinger (2000) claim that folk-psychological approaches to wisdom support "the coordinated and balanced interplay of intellectual, affective, and motivational aspects of human functioning" (p. 123).

As reflexive researchers, who acknowledge the epistemic value of inductive and deductive modes of research, we also seek to find ways in which the data adds to

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[4] The concept of doxa varies with different authors. For Aristotle, "in the final chapter of *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle links *techne* with *episteme* because both involve knowing universals, but differentiates infallible *episteme* and *nous* from fallible *doxa* and *logismos,* which include *techne* (100a6-9, 200b5-9)" Barker, E.M. "Aristotle's Reform of Paideia; http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Anci/AnciBark.htm," 2005. However, our notion of doxa is that used by Bourdieu: "spontaneous belief or opinion [that] … would seem unquestionable and natural" (p. 112); "things people accept without knowing" (p. 114), in Bourdieu, P., and Eagleton, T. "Doxa and common life: In conversation," *New Left Review* (191) 1992, pp 111 - 121.

theory. Thus, while *TGKW* does not overtly consider several of our components of wisdom, it nevertheless yields important insights not yet adequately considered by theory. *TGKW* speaks of: "visioning of leaders"; "perspective-taking capacity"; "personal and interpersonal insight"; and "clearly distinguishes between long-range goals" (p. 12) highlighting what might be called the 'seeingness' of wisdom. In other words, the capacity, where appropriate, to see past the quotidian and ephemeral features of any judgement and to envision the effect of alternative actions in the longer term are important aspects of wise managerial practice. This insight also relates to seeing ourselves. The capacity for "personal and interpersonal insight" expressed in *TGKW* is implied in #7, "apprehending who and what we are", and this relates back to the idea of empathetic caring. However, it might be better to call it insightful empathy and self awareness. One must not only know oneself and what others may feel, one must have a deeper understanding of one's own subject position and that of others to be wise. One reason for this is that to fully understand what it is to be someone else, what it is to experience particular phenomena from another's point of view, is a very useful attribute for a person in public service.

The notion of "self-restraint" in *TGKW* is also worthy of discussion because although it is implied in our notion of prudence (#5), it is an interesting choice of characteristics in its own right. Self-restraint is presented in *TGKW* as a bulwark against ephemerality at a time when things are constantly changing, perhaps sometimes merely for the sake of change (cf. Zorn et al. 2000). This is a capacity to avoid compulsive (and therefore faddish) behaviour that is likely to be detrimental in the long-term despite seeming to be attractive in the present. Related to this self-restraint is the ability to be adaptable; they are two sides of the same coin.

CONCLUSIONS

The Canadian Public Service document is a pleasing development because it endorses a wisdom approach as crucial to the virtuous and efficacious administration of public service within a nation. It is also praiseworthy for its application of sound and empirically-based psychological theory in characterising the nature of the wisdom sought. What is demonstrated in our analysis, however, is a tension between a theorisation of wisdom, which falls outside the functionalist and utilitarian values and assumptions privileged in the dominant managerial discourse. An effect of this domination is that speaking about the more elevated processes needed for wisdom is made problematic because it comes from outside the dominant discourse meaning that many of those who value the assumptions of the dominant paradigm will be uncomfortable with, even threatened by, wisdom theory. Therefore, we argue that wisdom likely to be a partially understood and accepted concept in management leading to poor conceptualisations and implementations of it within organisations. Therefore, we caution that just as knowledge management is limited by a lack of theoretical completeness in relation to knowledge, it is likely to be the case that wisdom management will be weakened by a lack of knowledge about wisdom. It would be unfortunate and an opportunity lost if an emerging enthusiasm for wisdom in management is met by this fate.

Appendix

Concept	Absolute Count	Relative Count
senior	40	100%
wisdom	39	97.5%
retirement	35	87.5%
public	35	87.5%
knowledge	31	77.5%
public service	31	77.5%
years	29	72.5%
career	27	67.5%
leaders	26	65%
work	26	65%
pension	25	62.5%
time	24	60%
leadership	23	57.4%
public servants	23	57.4%
age	23	57.4%
individuals	22	55%
transfer	21	52.5%
experience	16	40%
roles	15	37.5%
retire	15	37.5%
older	15	37.5%
context	14	35%
organization	14	35%
executives	13	32.5%
programs	12	30%
greater	10	25%
organizations	10	25%
effective	10	25%
leaving	8	20%
problem	8	20%
mentoring	8	20%
available	7	17.5%
period	6	15%
capacity	5	12.5%
level	4	10%
projects	4	10%
occurring	3	7.5%

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