

# **Self, Change and Leadership: An Autobiographical Inquiry**

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### Setting the Scene

#### Introduction

I was beginning the second year of a new job as head of marketing at Peacocks, a national fashion clothing retailer based in Cardiff, when I received a leaflet in the post announcing a new course at a nearby university – a ‘Guided Doctorate in Organisational Leadership and Change...a programme for senior managers who wish to pursue research into their practice in their own organisations’. This sounded interesting and could help me to understand the dynamics of my new position with my identity. I had previously thought about how I had worked within the structure and culture of the organisations I had been employed by. As new senior positions in new organisations reflected my career growth, I became increasingly conscious of my identity (Adams 2007) at work and wondered how leadership (Yukl 1998) contributed to my practice, if at all. As I later found out, the course was part of an emerging trend of practitioner doctorates where senior executives undertook doctoral research in their own organisations (Coghlan 2007). This approach could provide the answers to some searching questions that were already concerning me in my new job. I found the organisational culture (Schein 1997) and management style (Handy 1993) at Peacocks to be very different to anything I had previously experienced. I had even wondered whether they really needed the ‘experienced retail marketer with an MBA’ that the Sunday Times advertisement had stipulated. I experienced a period of uncertainty in how I felt my colleagues perceived me and my performance that led me to question my practice. The organisational setting was somewhat unusual and I was the ‘new boy’, one that was not adept at playing politics (Hope 2010), an activity that I increasingly felt clashed with my values (Michie & Gooty 2005) of trust, fairness and honesty (Burns 1978). Despite these concerns, I was resolved to continue working at Peacocks and to attempt to make the changes to the organisation that I considered were necessary. The Guided Doctorate course appealed to me as a way to contribute to my work and for me to understand, learn and create my practice as a leader.

My research journey had begun.

This chapter introduces the elements of my thesis and presents to the reader an overview of what is to follow in subsequent chapters.

I first explain the purpose of my inquiry which is to critically explore and analyse my attitudes, values and behaviours in the context of being a leader in a retail organisation, to construct my leadership practice and to develop theory that would contribute to knowledge.

The contribution to knowledge (where my thesis found something new and interesting that confirmed and modified existing understanding) and contribution to practice (where my thesis identified something new about the practice of leadership) are introduced together with reflections on methodology (where my thesis used a specific combination of methods and techniques).

I introduce myself and the organisation where I worked so that the reader may understand the context of my research.

I describe the research methodology which is based on a postmodern constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). My thesis is written as an autobiography (Smith & Watson 2010 ) and presents my findings as useful to others as well as myself.

I outline the conceptual framework based on three themes – self (Mead 1934; Giddens 1990; Adams 2007), change (Yukl 1998; Kotter 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003) and leadership (Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006) – theories that my primary research findings are reflected against.

The chapter concludes with a summary of the salient points from this introduction and outlines the structure of chapters in the remainder of the thesis.



## **The Purpose of My Research**

The seeds of exploring my leadership practice were sown some years before I was aware of the guided doctorate in organisational leadership and change and before I joined Peacocks. Having experienced different organisations and cultures over my career and worked with colleagues that I mainly admired and a few that I did not, I had wondered how my identity had shaped my attitudes, values and behaviours at work and in a reciprocal manner how the organisations I worked for had influenced my identity through habitus (Bourdieu 1977). I now had the opportunity to explore these aspects in my work at Peacocks where I had a senior leadership position in the organisation.

The purpose of my autobiography was to Smith & Watson 2010 critically explore and analyse my attitudes, values and behaviours in the context of my role as head of marketing in a retail organisation. In a change and leadership context, relatively few studies have employed interpretative, autobiographical methodologies or examined the subjective experience and identity of practising change leaders (Haynes 2006). I wanted my thesis to help me understand and find meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) in my identity (Adams 2007) at work and to construct my leadership practice. I could then develop a theory that would contribute to knowledge and practice. Although my research was conducted through the lens of my subjective interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and even bias (Dwyer & Buckle 2009), I believed that my narrative based upon a robust interrogation of theory, method and data and the relationship between all three had the potential to be of use to others and have a wider benefit for leaders in many walks of life and positions.

Underpinning the purpose of my study were several subsidiary reasons and perspectives that inspired my desire to undertake my research. First, the inquiry was conducted during a period of significant organisational change (Kotter 1996) that presented opportunities and issues for my leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006). Second, I experienced personal change (Quinn *et al* 2000) during the course of my inquiry that impacted on my leadership practice. Third, I wanted to demonstrate how autobiography (Smith & Watson 2010) was a valid and appropriate research methodology to share my study with others and to write purposefully so as to make a difference (Ellis & Bochner 2003). In saying that, I became aware of the potential

dangers of accessing myself through the views of others as a result of my insider (Maydell 2010) position as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004). Fourth, I wanted to pursue the exploration of my leadership practice through a postmodern (Gergen 2000) epistemology and question the authenticity of human knowledge and practice (Schon 1987) where it was not possible to access the truth (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). This approach would paradoxically question the very idea of leadership as a series of taken-for-granted practices. This seemed to be contradictory to the purpose of my thesis yet I knew there would be value to myself and potentially to others in pursuing my inquiry. Finally, the contribution of my social world (McNay 2000) to my research cannot be underestimated given its influence over my life. I knew that during the course of my study, reflexivity (Adams 2006) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977) each contributed to the construction of my identity, although I was unsure which was the most influential.

At the beginning of my inquiry, my aspirations of achieving progress in understanding myself and my practice were surrounded by a mixture of hope and anxiety, largely attributed to what I would find out about myself and my practice. It seemed inevitable that the exploration of my leadership at work would produce a unique experience for me and one that would improve my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992). As the research progressed, the working environment and circumstances changed and included new and difficult situations where established leadership skills were tested and new approaches required. The timing of my research was highly appropriate and enabled me to explore unforeseen aspects of my leadership. The data collection activities produced 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) that stimulated a robust analysis, generating themes and constructions that reflected my leadership practice. I experienced a range of feelings and emotions (Fineman 1993) at work, both positive and negative, in response to working with colleagues at all levels throughout the organisation. These experiences created the foundation for the exploration and analysis of my leadership practice at Peacocks. I anticipated a heuristic approach would lead to 'self-examination, significant personal learning and change' (Stiles 1993 p.604).

### **Contributions to Knowledge, Practice & Reflections on Methodology**

My learning from the experience of undertaking a PhD study enabled a contribution to knowledge to be made. The result of the synthesis between the conceptual framework, data discussion and analysis and the resultant findings produced contributions to theory and to practice, as well as reflections on methodology. Although all three ways were distinct, there were also synergies, overlaps and adjacencies throughout that strengthened the richness of the contributions.

Most extant models of change in organisations take insufficient account of the individual within the planning and implementation of organisational change. Burke (2008) claims, for example, that we have insufficient understanding of the planning and implementation of organisational change. The contribution being made in this thesis, therefore, is to the mainstream management literature on change. My autobiographical account describes the central role of the individual in leading and developing organisational change and highlights the pivotal contribution of the identity of the individual and their leadership practice in organisational change environments.

My study revealed that the construction of my identity was built from a combination of theories of selfhood and not solely from one theory. Reflexivity and habitus were instrumental in this process as I examined my practice at work where my inquiry allowed me as an insider (Maydell 2010) in my research to listen and understand the views of my culture.

My study contributed to the literatures of change by depicting my personalised, albeit subjective, experiences of the human dimension of change and the role of the individual which provided a different perspective to the process driven nature of many change literatures.

I considered that my practice was a hybrid of transformational and transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) in response to the descriptions of my leadership and management behaviours made by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) and my reflexivity (Adams 2007). My work on transformational activities such as strategy, customers and organisational culture contrasted with day-to-day activities that

prompted me to reflect upon whether I was capable of leading and managing and indeed what these concepts constituted. My personal reality was grounded in my working environment and I was creating truths about myself and my work where I interacted with others in my localised (Gergen 2000) context. My research revealed aspects of leadership that were not apparent in the literature. Issues of power, influencing and politics were prevalent in my practice. I questioned the very concept of leadership and constructed my understanding of what leadership meant to me.

My thesis connected the themes of self, change and leadership, an area that was under represented in extant literatures. I learnt that leadership was an ephemeral aspect of my practice, sometimes transformational but for the most part transactional which can also be described as management. The themes of self and change were significant in my practice and further diluted the presence of leadership per se, to the extent that it was more realistic to refer more simply to my practice rather than my leadership practice.

My thesis contributed to practice through a commercial organisational setting and demonstrated new learning's concerning senior positions one level below the board of directors. It was from this perspective that the analysis revealed not only the specific themes of my practice, namely self, change and leadership, but also reported the daily organisational life that was imbued with power, influencing, politics, emotions et al. From a practitioners perspective, there was a 'dearth of in-depth research on the development of leadership practice from a relational, social and situated perspective' (Kempster & Stewart 2010 p.205). I hoped that my leadership experiences as a practitioner would form the basis of an inquiry where I could present an account to extend sociological understanding (Sparkes 2000) and where the reader would share in my experience as author (Jones 2002). My understanding of my leadership practice was of importance to me and colleagues and practitioners could also potentially benefit from my narrative (Duncan 2004). To the best of my knowledge, there has been no research concerning leadership as practiced by a head of marketing within a retail organisation, particularly in South Wales, and my inquiry makes a contribution to practice in this context.

My thesis prompted reflections on the methodology employed through a novel use of research methodology and methods and proposed a model for use by researchers and practitioners in similar circumstances to myself who aim to examine their leadership practice and the field more generally. I adopted Cresswell's (2009) model of research design that included a postmodern (Gergen 2000; Bauman 2004) philosophical worldview, a qualitative strategy of inquiry based upon a constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and a research method based on an autobiographical narrative (Smith & Watson 2010 ). As well as value to myself as author, I saw my work offering a way to improve the lives of participants and readers (Ellis 2004) that could include my colleagues and a wider audience. Amongst my data collection methods, I focused on interviews with colleagues in the formats of one-to-one and focus groups (alternatively referred to as group interviews: Ritchie & Barker 2005). These were specifically adapted from more conventional uses of interviews to address the purpose of my inquiry in the context of being the researcher and subject (Ellis 2004). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that such interview formats were employed in such an inquiry and where the effects of being an insider researcher (Maydell 2010) had to be considered. Qualitative studies of transformational leadership based on a subjective and interpretive epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) are to the best of my knowledge rare in the literature. My autobiographical inquiry contributed to filling this gap and was of value to myself and others in similar positions.

### **Introducing My Self**

I wrote my autobiography at the beginning of my research –‘the writing of one’s own history; the story of one’s life written by oneself’ (Winslow 1995), itself a source of data collection used in ethnographic research (Davies 1998). This helped me locate the key themes of my life as I interpreted them, drawing upon my memories and tangible reminders, such as photographs and other personal memorabilia. The opportunity to reflect (Schon 1983) was a valuable exercise prior to exploring my leadership practice as I brought myself, my history and my experiences into my workplace. My autobiography (Appendix 1) outlined the main themes of my life as I perceived them, including my childhood, my parents, my family, growing up, dealing with adverse times and work experiences. Here are some extracts:

‘My mother has been my friend, disciplinarian, protector and a symbol of strength. She gave me my determination and sense of 'family'. Mum not only ran the home, but also contributed to the income of the house with two part time jobs. It was Mum who dealt out the punishments, but it was also Mum who made those fantastic Yorkshire Puddings, dumplings, stews, desserts and cakes. Despite not moving out of the area, she saw tremendous changes in the town and in her role as a wife and mother. When describing her, words like reliable, caring and willing to help are at the top of the list’.

‘My relationship with my father was based on a deep respect for him, although it was more distant than the relationship with my mother. My father was 47 when I was born, and was therefore always an 'older' father when compared to my peers. As I moved into my teens I became very aware of my father’s age, and the fact that his ill health made him look even older. He came from a different generation, born in 1910, and brought up in a middle class family that was a lifetime away and so different from the 1970’s’.

‘I survived a life threatening illness – meningococcal septicaemia – at the age of eleven. I was lucky enough not to have any physical or mental disability as a result of the illness. After three days in a coma, with various drips and wires plugged into me, I started to recover and this took about six months, a period of great worry for my parents. The event had a major influence on my life in the sense that if things are not going to plan sometimes, I think back to my illness and that I should be grateful that things turned out as well as they did’.

‘I grew up in a ‘traditional’ family environment with Mum, Dad and my sister. We lived in a pleasant semi-detached house, about three miles outside Keighley and very near to the village of Haworth, famous for being the home of the Bronte sisters. The area was characterised by a mix of industrial and farming activities, surrounded by moors and hills. I thought it was a really interesting place to grow up, although I once read that when Mrs Gaskell arrived at Keighley railway station to begin her research for her biography of Charlotte Bronte, "she found the area so unattractive that she feared a stranger could never come to understand it".

‘There was never any doubt that I would have a family of my own. Making the transition from being single to married seemed to work pretty seamlessly. I met my wife Sue in 1982 whilst working in Leatherhead. We were married in 1983, having relocated to Bolton as a result of my new job working in Liverpool’.

‘My son James is twenty-five, Kate twenty-two Gabrielle twelve. Gabrielle is constantly on the move, busy with school, sport and music. Kate works for Ben Sherman in London after gaining a 2.1 degree in Fashion Buying and Marketing. She is the life and soul of wherever she is. James is intelligent and gentle, a dreamer. His passion has been to be a rock star. James has started two university courses but has dropped out of both. He has had a hard time, not realising the damage the cannabis was doing to him. He will have mental health problems for a long time. Our family is strong and we have survived the last ten years and we are grateful that nothing worse has happened to James as we know several people that have not been as fortunate’.

‘I have spent my working life in marketing, a field that seemed to reflect my academic strengths, together with my practical orientation – that’s thirty years working for consumer goods or retail companies in various senior marketing positions, the last being here at Peacocks, where I have spent virtually half of my working life’.

These experiences and many others in my life resulted in a socially constructed (Mead 1934; Callero 2003) identity. My behaviours, attitudes and values (Senge 1996) are a product of my personality (Gergen 2000), my childhood (Jenks 2005), adolescence

(Furstenberg 2000), early adulthood (Goldscheider & DaVanzo 1989) and the influences of family (McDaniel & Tepperman 2003), friends (Feld 1991) and fellow workers (Casey 1995). As I reflected on these influences, I recognised many of them in my espoused and enacted practice at work.

My perception of my personal characteristics was based upon my reflexivity (Adams 2007) and subjectivity (Rose 1998) in interpreting my life experiences. I included the importance of my family; loyalty, fairness in how people were treated; traditional values including respect for others; love; honesty; trustfulness; a willingness to change and learn; a sense of humour; a practical nature; reliable; a determination to see things through; sometimes a late developer; a thinker and at times a dreamer; occasionally lacking in confidence and at other times absolutely sure of my actions; sensitive to the needs of others; calm and relaxed, which belied an underlying deep anxiety on many occasions; at times too concerned with what others thought about me; a controller of my emotions, sometimes too much; independent but also needing others; a follower of rules when relevant, but rebellious when needed; sometimes having problems with authority figures; concerned if I am not involved in what's going on; quiet; private; a listener; slow at times; fast at times; idealistic; striving for perfection. The influence of these self-defined characteristics is contingent on my social environment and I detected a temporal dimension to the level or frequency of their presence and manifestation in my moods and behaviours. Nevertheless, these were aspects of my identity that were integral to my physical presence at work and contributed to my leadership practice in both positive and negative manners.

### **Introducing My Organisation**

I joined Peacocks, a national high street clothing retailer, in 1995 at its head office in Cardiff as head of marketing, a new position created to “bring a more professional approach to the company’s marketing activities” (Robert Peacock, Chairman, 1995). Peacocks had experienced massive changes over the last decade in response to changing customer (Moran & Brightman 2001) trends for clothing, one of the most competitive markets in the UK. Since 1996, Peacocks annual sales have grown from £65 million to £550 million, profit (PBT) has grown from £3 million to over £70 million and the number of stores has grown from 130 to over 580. By any standard, this is a dramatic growth and I was part of the senior management team that achieved

this, making a significant contribution to the development of ideas and their implementation. My contribution encompassed functional responsibilities including commercial marketing and branding activities, as well as wider organisational issues and initiatives, such as how we worked internally and developed an organisational culture (Schein 1997) that focussed on customers. I instigated many changes to reflect changing customer (Moran & Brightman 2001) needs that I considered were right for the business. The majority of these changes and initiatives were successful, but there were some failures as well. Much of my work reflected my own beliefs, values (Senge 1996) and passion. In my research, I wrote about my experiences during my time at Peacocks and focused on how my leadership practice developed through the opportunities and setbacks that I encountered whilst searching for an understanding of myself along the way.

When I joined Peacocks, the marketing department (Workman & Jensen 2000) was a service function (Lui & Davies 1997) to the buying and retail departments and the main activities focused on store promotions and a wide range of responsibilities that were uncoordinated and had little to do with marketing. It seemed as if the department had become the depository for jobs that needed to be done but nobody else wanted to do them. Although the four members of marketing were dedicated and enthusiastic, there was little communication between themselves and even less with other departments. I had a passion for customers (Moran & Brightman 2001) and in building a customer focussed organisation (Kotler 2009), encompassing all departments and colleagues. And that meant change (Kotter 1996) – in all sorts of ways. This took me down the path of developing a marketing department that included customer research, market and competitor intelligence, product and pricing reviews, store presentation, visual merchandising, point of sale, display equipment, promotions, advertising, public relations, space planning, product packaging, new store activities and customer service. These developments involved the recruitment of new colleagues and their integration within the existing team. Resistance to change (Pawson 1994) and negative attitudes needed to be challenged in order to facilitate the changes, which inevitably led to conflict (Morgan 1997) and power (Obholzer 1994) struggles involving others and myself in the organisation.



One of the major barriers I found was a lack of understanding (Piercy 1997; Lui & Davies 1997) by most of my senior colleagues as to what marketing actually was and what I was meant to do in my job. Having spent my career in companies where the marketing concept (Doyle 2000; Kotler 1991) was central to how the organisation operated, in retrospect I was perhaps naïve to think that this would also be the case at Peacocks. The position I found myself in was that the board of directors were split in terms of being serious about marketing. Even those directors that were supportive did not really understand what marketing (Kotler 2009) and a customer (Moran & Brightman 2001) perspective meant. This split within the board had significant implications for my leadership practice and posed innumerable problems and challenges. I often thought that if had been recruited to set up an accounts department or a retail management team, then I may have had an easier time. These were functions that the board understood. Marketing seemed to fall into the optional, ‘nice to have’ category – “it’s just point of sale and leaflets, isn’t it?” more or less summed up their attitude. But perhaps I should not have been too surprised at this situation. There is a significant body of literature regarding marketing and marketing departments in the UK (Denison & McDonald 1995; Piercy 1997; Moorman & Rust 1999; Homburg, Workman & Jensen 2000) which reported that although there are benefits to adopting a marketing philosophy and approach, there are few UK companies that were truly marketing oriented and that marketing management as a function is in decline. My own approach followed the marketing concept with the customer as the central focus of an organisation (Kotler 1991; Drucker 1989). Despite the voluminous writings that outlined the benefits of marketing, much of the concern with customers had been at a superficial level (Christopher 1992) and Peacocks was one of those companies. This aspect of the organisational culture (Schein 1997) had a bearing on my practice and how I went about my work in the organisation.

My working time was split broadly into two areas with the common aim of communication (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). First, within the marketing department (Homburg, Workman & Jensen 2000) there were four managers and we met regularly to discuss issues and activities. There were also one-to-one discussions, some arranged but most being impromptu when a discussion or decision was needed. There were also weekly sales briefings and monthly meetings for all members of the team as the department grew in size and we had the occasional social event.

The second main area of my work time was with senior colleagues. Each Monday a Trading meeting was held to review the previous week's sales, current issues and the plans for the immediate future and was attended by the Directors and fellow Heads of the Buying, Merchandising and Retail departments. There were other meetings that were held on a formal or informal basis, which resulted in 'meeting mania' at times. I also spent time with my director, the managing director, and other directors, where a range of subjects were discussed – ideas, proposals, problems, issues and updates. Store visits to discuss activities with store managers and to keep me up to date with customers happened on average once a month. I therefore had a wide range of colleagues and departments that I became involved with and as my time at Peacocks continued, became an important base to develop my ideas.

Shortly after I joined Peacocks, other major changes started to happen on a wider scale within the organisation. Many of these were instigated or supported by the new chief executive who set about reviewing the business. His energy and enthusiasm contrasted sharply to the staid and defensive behaviours of the previous senior management. Increasingly customers (Moran & Brightman 2001) were being thought about and the actual word used in meetings. This move towards the customer was supported through a series of internal courses, 'The Peacocks Customer Focused Leadership Programme', designed to change the culture (Schein 1997) of the organisation and lead to improved performance. These and other tangible activities were well intentioned and seen as a new phase of development, yet poor execution and communication, inconsistent behaviour from senior management and a feeling that the initiative was a facade led to a high level of scepticism from many colleagues. New values committed colleagues to what appeared to be unrealistically high, and indeed unnatural, levels of behaviour. Discussing values and ways of working in meetings and displaying the resultant values on posters throughout the organisation proved to be the relatively easy part - changing peoples' actual behaviour and attitudes in the desired manner was more difficult. The lack of enthusiasm from colleagues was compounded by expectations set by the Board that the 'new culture' was to be achieved in a short period of time. The programme took a path that became mis-understood. Colleagues thought that the 'new culture' meant that everyone should be 'nice' to each other, that criticism had to be raised in a certain way so as not to offend. The phrases 'have you been cultured?' and 'that's against the culture now'

became part of the internal language (Fairhurst 2009). For those who expected immediate change and whose expectations of others were raised, there was disappointment. Despite these issues, over a period of time, the customer perspective became more evident and colleagues became more aware of the external and internal customer (Moran & Brightman 2001). For my own part, I was disappointed that more could not have been done. Perhaps a stronger leader would have responded better to the challenge than I did.

The changing organisational environment made it an interesting time for my research. I contributed to change on an organisational level that concerned a subject I was functionally responsible for (marketing and by implication, customers) and where I had a passion. This was a situation where my leadership had an opportunity to be practiced yet I was concerned whether I was capable of such leadership given my identity (Adams 2007) and the organisational environment. These questions ultimately formed the reasons and inspiration for my research.

### **The Conceptual Framework**

I constructed a conceptual framework from the literatures of self, change and leadership to help me acquire knowledge of the world and to enlighten and develop my understanding and analysis of my practice at work. The three literature themes addressed the purpose of my inquiry and were instrumental in the analysis of my data, constructing my practice and in the development of theory.

#### *Self*

The theme of self was relevant to my inquiry given that I was at the centre of the research as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004). The critical review outlined theories of selfhood based upon symbolic interaction (Mead 1934; Goffman 1959), postmodernism (Giddens 1991; Gergen 2000; Adams 2007) and psychoanalytic theories (Freud 1900; Ellis 2008). The review included a critical discussion of reflexivity (Schon 1983; Callero 2003; Adams 2006) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006; Elder-Vass 2007).

### *Change*

The theme of change was relevant to my inquiry given that changes in economic, political, global and social environments were inevitable aspects of organisational and personal life (Kanter, Stein & Jick 1997). Several change models were described including Lewin (1951), Kotter (1996) and Pendlebury, Grouard and Meston (1998) and the origin of change was outlined in the literature concerning planned and emergent change (Bamford & Forrester 2003). Several writers emphasised how change was inextricably linked with leadership (Yukl 1998; Kotter 1999; Zaleznik 1977). A model of change and self (George & Jones 2001) focused on change at the individual level of analysis,

### *Leadership*

The theme of leadership was relevant to my inquiry given that leadership is in some way part of my practice. The review traced the theoretical developments in leadership literature, beginning with early classical models (Grint 1997) and moving towards the present day (Stogdill 1974; Bryman 1997; Greenleaf 1998). I focused on the theory that I considered represented my practice and to which I compared my primary research findings against - transactional and transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bennis & Nanus 1986; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006). I also included in a leadership context the associated concepts of organisational culture (Schein 1997; Morgan 1997), the role of influence and power (Yukl 2006; Morriss 2002; Obholzer 1994; Foucault 1980) and organisational psychodynamics (Hirschhorn 2000; Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 1993; Fineman 1993; Bion 1970; French & Vince 1999). As a final section concerning the self, the concept of leadership and self (Neck, Manz, Godwin 1999) was reviewed.

In order to facilitate the purpose of my research, I required a research design where I was positioned at the centre of my inquiry (Ellis 2004).

### **Developing the Research Methodology**

Like many other researchers attempting to research their own work, I wondered what would be the most appropriate research methodology. I was unaware at the beginning of my inquiry as to what would be uncovered during the course of my research and where it may lead to. In my professional role (Hirschhorn 2000) working within

marketing, I had experienced research in quantitative and qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln 1994) fields although this work had been conducted by research agencies as observers of various subjects and I was removed from the research arena. In my inquiry, I would be at the centre of my research (Ellis 2004), a position where my professional experience had little bearing.

Given the purpose of my inquiry, I followed Cresswell's (2009) model of research design based on three elements - a philosophical worldview, a strategy of inquiry and a research method. I consequently developed the research design with a postmodern philosophy, a constructivist paradigm and a narrative written as an autobiography (Smith & Watson 2010) .

### ***The Philosophical Worldview - Postmodernism***

The philosophical worldview of postmodernism (Gergen 2000) welcomed diversity, variety, multiple interpretations of phenomena and multiple strategies, where localised, individual explanations were explored. Postmodernism emphasised subjectivity. Emphasis was placed on change, flexibility and transformation. Since individuals perceived the truth about the world differently, it became important in a postmodernist view to listen and understand individual perceptions. I looked to find ways of working that complemented my values, views of reality and beliefs about how knowledge was known and created. My ontological view of reality and my epistemological understanding of what it means to know were intertwined. Ontologically, I assumed 'personal reality' and epistemologically the notion of 'lived experience', subjectivity and meaning within relative context. Postmodernism also had a relevance to the social world and the self, being set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world, characterised by a sense of fragmentation, an erosion of the idea of a firm sense of self and a falling away of traditional values. What was generally characterised as the postmodern condition was largely a by-product of the century's technologies of social saturation (Gergen 2000). In a rapidly changing world where there was radical reconsideration of our long-standing traditions of truth and knowledge, 'the very idea of individual selves is now threatened with eradication' (Gergen 2000 viii).

### ***The Strategy of Inquiry***

The strategy of inquiry was based on a constructivist paradigm. I had a natural empathy with qualitative research, which ‘involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world; deploying a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2003 p.4). Qualitative research was participative, socially constructed and reflexive. Here, research was an interactive process, shaped by personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity and by the people in the setting. Qualitative research was entirely appropriate to a postmodern philosophy where there was no single interpretive truth – all truths are partial truths. Interpretations were narrative, or storied accounts, which may privileged any of a number of narrative positions that referred to the major paradigms of qualitative research, interpretive frameworks and beliefs that guided action (Guba 1990). For the purpose of my inquiry I followed a postmodern constructivist paradigm based on a relativist ontology (multiple constructed realities), interpretive epistemologies (the knower and known interact and shape one another) and interpretive, naturalistic methods (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

### ***The Research Method – Autobiography***

I wrote my narrative as an autobiography (Smith & Watson 2010). As researcher and subject (Ellis 2004) I was able to construct my practice as I sought value from others in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006), allowing me to include my reflexivity and views and feelings that were integral to my study. As the study was about my practice, autobiography allowed me to write in the first person and express aspects of my research in a way that would complement how I understood my identity (Adams 2007) to be.

Autobiography was a valid and appropriate research methodology for my study. Although this research was specific to my individual situation, as well as value to me as author I saw my work offering a way to improve the lives of others (Ellis 2004). These could include the research participants, colleagues and a wider audience including the readers of my thesis where my work is an example that could be used by practitioners in similar circumstances to me who are looking into their leadership practice and the field more generally. Researchers may find my methodology and

methods that I used relevant to their inquiries. My analysis could transfer to all leadership roles. This would answer the questions ‘how useful is the story?’ and ‘to what uses might the story be put?’ (Bochner 2002). Readers can be invited to think with my story rather than about it (Ellis & Bochner 2000). My study does not attempt to convey universal truths but rather it conveyed a self-narrative of a particular leadership practice. It is hoped that the reader might relate to the narrative in a meaningful way and provide a lens through which he/she might obtain personal insights into their leadership practice. I hope the readers of this study will ‘by exploring a particular life...understand a way of life, as Reed-Danahay says’ (Ellis & Bochner 2000). This would complete a circle of construction where my social world contributed to my inquiry and I then returned my work to others as a potentially useful study to call upon.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The data collection and analysis phases followed and I considered how apposite potential data collection activities were for an autobiographical narrative I wanted to include other data sources as well as my own which would represent a wider cultural perspective and I used other colleagues that I worked with to give feedback on myself as the subject of my research. My resultant data collection methods comprised my introductory autobiography, a series of one-to-one and focus groups and a personal journal based upon events, critical incidents and observations.

The data analysis phase was ‘a process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal its characteristic elements and structure’ (Dey 1993 p.30). The literature models for data analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994; Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Dey 1993; Wolcott 1994) provided a framework and guidance for this crucial phase of my inquiry. My aim was to analyse the data to produce a meaningful account, ‘producing a narrative that was authentic’ (McIlveen 2008). I was aware of the position I was in as an insider (Maydell 21010) in my research and the power that was available to me in how I would interpret the data. Reflection took place at all points along the data collection and analysis journey, contributing to the identification and development of research themes and formed the foundations of the construction of my practice.

## **Research Themes and Constructions**

The analysis of data produced three themes that mirrored the conceptual framework – self, change and leadership. Each theme was developed through a critical analysis (Browne & Keeley 2006) to produce constructions that depicted my practice at work. There was a robust interrogation of theory, method and data and the relationship between all three. In total, nineteen constructions were identified that represented my leadership practice encapsulated in the themes of self, change and leadership. Being at the centre of my inquiry as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004), I was conscious of my subjectivity and my ability to critically explore and analyse my practice. I recognised that I would have some form of bias (Dwyer & Buckle 2009) in my work and the resulting findings would be my version of the truth despite strenuously attempting to understand and include the views of my social world (McNay 2000).

In addition to my narrative being written in the first person (Ellis & Bochner 2000), I also strove to write in the past tense to recognise the temporal aspect of my inquiry. All aspects of my research, and particularly the analysis and interpretation phases, were performed at a moment in time that had past. Today, I may approach my study differently. If I undertook my inquiry again, my changing cultural context and socially constructed identity may lead to a different set of data and a different interpretation that would reflect myself at that moment in time.

## **Summary**

Throughout my research, I was acutely aware that I was at the centre of the study and that the inquiry was about my experiences in my social context at work. The conceptual framework consisting of the themes of self, change and leadership provided the platform upon which my inquiry progressed. My research methodology and methods enabled a critical exploration and analysis of my attitudes, values and behaviours in the context of being a leader in a retail organisation for me to understand and construct my leadership practice. The theory I developed would contribute to knowledge and be useful (Bochner 2002) not only to myself but to others in similar positions.



My thesis is presented as follows.

Chapter two presents the conceptual framework based upon extant literatures that I considered relevant to my inquiry.

Chapter three presents the research methodology which I constructed to meet the purpose of my study and reflected my position as central to the inquiry as researcher and subject.

Chapters four presents an analysis and discussion regarding the theme of self based upon constructions identified from the research data

Chapter five presents an analysis and discussion regarding the theme of change based upon constructions identified from the research data

Chapter six presents an analysis and discussion regarding the theme of leadership based upon constructions identified from the research data

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter and holistically discusses the study findings and outlines the resulting contribution to knowledge of my study.

# The Conceptual Framework

### Introduction

I was motivated to undertake my research journey through a recognition that I wanted to understand and create meaning out of experience (Bruner 1990) regarding my leadership practice. I had recently joined Peacocks and experienced a period of uncertainty in terms of how I felt my colleagues perceived me and my performance that led me to question my practice. I knew that I had knowledge and personal strengths to draw upon, yet there was an underlying insecurity that was perhaps as a result of my childhood experiences (Kets de Vries 1993). I hoped that my research would help me improve my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992) and contribute to the growth of Peacocks in the way that I knew I was capable of. In pursuing my research, I drew upon extant literature as a knowledge base to inquire into my practice.

The conceptual framework was constructed from literatures that situated my leadership practice within a changing social world (Gergen 2000). I approached my conceptualisation in the spirit of the bricoleur (Denzin & Lincoln 1994) and built a framework that enabled me to explore and analyse my leadership, to compare and contrast theory to my practice and to identify themes and constructions from which theory could be developed and a contribution to knowledge made.

My understanding and analysis of my practice was informed by three themes from the literature: self, change and leadership. Concepts were drawn from theories to help me acquire knowledge of the world and to enlighten and develop my understanding and analysis of my leadership practice. I anticipated that the findings of my inquiry would be of value to others through an autobiographical (Smith & Watson 2010) method of writing where my interpretation of my experiences would relate to others in similar positions.

This chapter presents a critical review of the literature concerning self, change and leadership and concludes with an integration of the themes to construct a conceptual framework for the analysis of the data collected during my inquiry.

## **Self**

‘No idea is more unstable, flexible or pliable in contemporary social theory than that of the self’ (Elliot 2008). The inclusion of self in the conceptual framework is in response to the purpose of the inquiry where I anticipated an understanding (Gergen 2000) of how my values, attitudes and behaviours contributed to my leadership practice. The theme of self is all the more relevant as I was at the centre of the research as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004) where my thesis is written as an autobiographical narrative (Smith & Watson 2010). Consequently, knowledge of myself is vital to this inquiry.

The following critical review outlines theories of selfhood based upon symbolic interaction (Mead 1934; Goffman 1959), postmodernism (Giddens 1991; Gergen 2000; Adams 2007) and psychoanalytic concepts (Freud 1900; Ellis 2008). The review concluded with a critical discussion of reflexivity (Schon 1983; Callero 2003; Adams 2006) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006; Elder-Vass 2007).

As a general introduction, ‘the emerging direction of contemporary social theory is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the attention it lavishes upon the nature of the self, self-identity and individual subjectivity’ (Elliot 2008 p.13) - ‘beliefs about the self seem pivotal to all our understandings’ (Gergen 2000 p.viii). There has been much time spent on attempts to differentiate between terms such as identity, self, psyche, subject, selfhood and personhood (Adams 2007). Giddens prefers the term self-identity where self has been likened to identity – ‘the self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography’ (Giddens 1991 p.53). Jenkins (1996) prefers the term ‘selfhood’ which emphasised the processual character of selfhood. Adams (2007) used the terms self and identity more or less interchangeably with ‘self’ being best thought of ‘as all the components of the individual taken together: one’s identity, the internal source of the sense of one’s identity and anything else purported to be involved, such as instincts’ (Adams 2007 p.12).

The discussion of self and identity is inseparable from the social, cultural, relational and discursive fabric in which it is constituted (Adams 2007). Social theory and selfhood are set against a rapidly changing world. The story of social change at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries is ‘a complex and contested one’ (Adams 2007). Among the far-reaching implications of a post-industrial condition are a dissolution of traditional bonds of social solidarity and a metamorphosis of the character of the modern self (Casey 1995). The effects of globalisation on the self are seen primarily through the disruption, elaboration and colonisation of local cultures (Callero 2003). Identity confusion occurs when the disruption of traditional practices and perspectives results in a loss of meaning and the erosion of tradition (Tomlinson 1999). Global media culture and increasing rates of migration also expose actors to a wider set of meanings for the construction of identity (Arnett 2002). Adams (2007) identifies several terms to indicate, or contest, the general shift to post-traditional society: globalisation, technology, the body, reflexivity, time and space, homogenization, transnational corporations, individualisation, polarisation and gender. New communication technologies have expanded access to a wide range of ‘generalised others’, thus altering ‘the backdrop against which identity is constructed’ (Cerulo 1997 p.397). ‘We are bombarded with ever-increasing intensity by the images and actions of others; our range of social participation is expanding exponentially’ (Gergen 2000. p.15).

### **The Symbolic Interaction Theory of Selfhood**

The social tradition of symbolic interaction is a perspective that emphasises the social construction of meaning of the self. Mead (1934) developed an interpretation of the social nature of the constitution of self and emphasised the social self where each of us fashions a sense of our own selfhood through engagement with other selves (Elliot 2008). Language is at the heart of the constitution of the self and symbols are a common currency through which individuals forge a sense of self and interact with other people. The self for Mead is at once individuality and generality, agent and recipient, sameness and difference. The individual self is peopled with ‘the attitude of others’ (Mead 1934) and since childhood, ‘taking the role of others’ is a way in which the self becomes attuned to the demands and pressures of society. Mead argues that the self is a direct product of existing relations (Adams 2003). The self, like the mind, is a social emergent - ‘the self is not initially there at birth, but arises in the process of

social experience and activity' (Mead 1934 p.135). One learns (Kolb 1996) how to perceive the world as others do in order to know how to behave appropriately. The individual thus acquires from the 'generalised other' (Cerulo 1997) a source of internal regulation that guides his/her behaviour. In this way, one becomes conscious of oneself as an object or individual and develops a self or personality (Mead 1934). There are as many selves as there are social roles and the individual is capable of holding membership in different groups, both simultaneously and serially and may therefore relate him/herself to different generalised others at different times. Although the self is a product of socio-symbolic interaction, it is not merely a passive reflection of the generalised other. Mead makes a crucial distinction between the 'I' and the 'me' in conceptualising the self. The 'me' is the socialised self made up of the internalised attitudes of others, the norms and values of society that the individual learns and accepts. The 'I' is the unsocialised self, the unique, individual, conscious and impulsive aspects of the person and is a response to the 'me'. The achievement of self-awareness arises when the self is able to distinguish the 'me' from the 'I' and attain a level of reflective distance from the demands of society. The self is a reflective process of social interaction - 'it is an object to itself' (Mead 1934 p.138). Reflexivity emerges from the social experience - 'it is by means of reflexiveness, the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself, that the whole process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it' (Mead 1934 p.134).

For symbolic interactionists, the study of social life is closely interwoven with the analysis of the meaning of human action that individuals actively construct and interpret (Elliot 2008). Our perceptions and motives change through new experiences and learning (Kolb 1996) and our self-concept (Gecas 1982) and behaviour also change. Personality, therefore, is not stable as the self-concept can be reorganised. We have perceptions of our qualities, abilities, attitudes, impulses and so on. If these perceptions are accurate, conscious, organised and accepted, then we can regard our self-concept as successful in that it will lead to feelings of comfort, freedom from tension and of psychological adjustment. Well-adjusted individuals thus have flexible images of themselves which are open to change through new experiences (Blumer 1969).

There are several weaknesses to symbolic interactionism. One major criticism is that the model outlined by Mead is too rationalistic, conscious and cognitive (Elliot 2008). His account of the self sometimes appears as disembodied, something that postmodernists would consider inadequate for developing a critical theory of the self. In Mead's theory, the self is seen as primarily cognitive because the seeds of self-consciousness are derived from individuals' consciously manipulating and constructing identity in accordance with that 'conversation of gestures' established through engagement with the social process. From a Freudian standpoint, this is too smooth a conception of the relationship between self and society (Elliot 2008). The emphasis on the cognitive at the expense of the emotional realm has been criticised as inadequate by authors influenced by Freud (1900) into the unconscious elements of the self that is structured by unconscious promptings. There is no recognition of the tension between individual desires, wishes and fantasies on the one hand and the requirements for social control and cultural order on the other. Mead's theory has also been criticised that it fails to accommodate a detailed analysis of the complexities of modern forms of social organisation or to consider the impact of social conflict upon the establishment of self-identity (Burkitt 1991 cited in Adams 2003). Mead's theory 'offers the basis for a general theory of social identity' (Jenkins 1996 p.44). Nevertheless, Mead's work reveals themes that have come to be important to contemporary discussions about the self - children develop a sense of identity through active, creative engagement with others; language and communication are pivotal to the fabrication of personal identity and the self; and the development of self-consciousness is intimately interwoven with taking on the role of others.

Goffman (1959) analysed our day-to-day activities with reference to the metaphor of the theatre, where the self consists in an awareness of the multiplicity of roles that are performed in various situated contexts. Public identity is performed for an audience and the private self knows that such performances are essential to identity and to the maintenance of respect and trust in routine social interaction (Elliot 2008). Identity might be constructed through the adoption of social roles and their validation by social institutions, but the individual is the creative and reflective agent who decides and in doing so constitutes self-identity, on how to carry out such roles as well as the staging of role performances. Goffman's (1959) central preoccupation is with the dramatic techniques by which self displays agency to others. All presentations of self

are situated within interactive frameworks involving social conventions, ethical assumptions and the positioning of bodies in relation to the physical feature of settings. Goffman (1959) argued that the individual must continually display competence of self to others and to the social world. This involves the chronic monitoring of self-identity and a kind of watchfulness over the most seemingly trivial aspects of social behaviour, including the control of bodily management. Much social theory, in particular postmodern theory, is devoted to a view of personal identity and social life filtered through images, performances, fragments and constructions and Goffman's theory might be seen as a precursor to such postmodernist sensibilities (Elliot 2008).

Each individual has a self-concept (Gecas 1982), a view as to how persons see themselves, how they feel about themselves and their sense of personal identity. We may experience a sense of individuality (being different from others) as well as a sense of inter-dependence (belonging and association with others). We derive our self-concept from the ways in which other people treat us and we learn about ourselves through the interactions with others.

James (1975) described two basis concepts within personality. Temperament is the physical and physiological basis of our personality which is to a large extent inherited. Character is the acquired aspect of personality that manifests itself in standards, attitudes and values where the environment influences the individual. It therefore follows that this aspect of personality is open to change through learning, changing behaviour and new experiences.

Identity has become a central concept to describe the behaviour of organisations and their members (Gioia *et al.* 2000) and the development of identity is a social and socially constructed process (Alvesson & Robertson 2006; Weick 1995). The context of work is a crucial domain for the development of personal identities (Hogg & Terry 2000). The increasingly complex and dynamic working environment requires organisational actors to reconcile competing demands and expectations, which impact on their sense of self (Galpin & Sims 1999). The struggles of reconciliation and sensemaking are reflected in the reflexive auto-biographical stories in which a person's identities are manifested (Funkenstein 1993; Archer 2007). These stories

allow organisational actors to develop their identities, deal with anxieties (Gabriel 2000) and make sense of incoherence and ambiguity (Weick 1995). Sensemaking, or the creation of meaning, is a retrospective narrative process (Weick 2001) that satisfies the fundamental human need for meaning (Bruner 1986; Sommer & Baumeister 1998) and affects a person's identity (Weick 2001). It also allows organisational actors to reconcile violated beliefs (Bruner 1986) and to establish purpose, control and self-worth (Sommer & Baumeister 1998).

The development of identity is a socially constructed process (Alvesson & Robertson 2006). Identity is influenced by a person's genetic material (Gioia 2000), their perceptions, roles, experiences (Sommer & Baumeister 1998), relationships (Brown & Starkey 2000) and social change (Williamson 1998). Identities are being adapted to changing circumstances while some stability is maintained (Gioia 2000). The development of personal identities is best seen as a narrative (Linde 1993) and reflexive process (Archer 2007) in which a person tells the story of self (Gabriel 2000) both to themselves through silent dialogue (Archer 2007) and to others as parochial accounts of their experiences (Reissner 2008). This implies that through telling their story to themselves and others, a person can experiment with different identities (Ibarra 1999), make sense of experience (Denzin 1989) and discover new ways of thinking (Reissner 2008).

### **Postmodern Theories of Selfhood**

Rose describes the image of the self that has appeared for so long – 'coherent, bounded, individualised, the locus of thought, action and belief, the origin of its own actions; possessing an identity which constituted our deepest most profound reality; characterised by a profound inwardness' (1998 p.3-4). This image of the unified subject has come under question both practically and conceptually. Postmodernism has made fashionable the argument that the self, like society and culture, has been transformed in current conditions: 'subjectivity is now fragmented, multiple, contradictory and the human condition entails each of us trying to make a life for ourselves under the constant gaze of our own suspicious reflexivity, tormented by uncertainty and doubt' (Rose 1998 p.9). A profound change took place in the character of social life during the twentieth century. We absorbed the views, values and visions of others and lived out the multiple plots in which we are enmeshed, in a



world in which we no longer experience a secure sense of self and in which doubt was increasingly placed on the very assumption of a bounded identity with palpable attributes (Gergen 2000). As traditional practices and cultural assumptions are destabilised, the self is exposed in various ways; an increasing individualisation of social life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002), a proliferation of roles (Frank & Meyer 2002) and the emergence of identity projects (Giddens 1991). It is claimed that the changing nature of economic and social structures in late-capitalist societies is becoming increasingly complex, plural and uncertain (McNay 2000). Modernity is characterised as a 'risk society' (Beck 1986 cited in Giddens 1991), leading to the return of uncertainty (Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994). We engage in greater numbers of relationships, in a greater variety of forms and with greater intensities than ever before. The relatively coherent and unified sense of self inherent in a traditional culture gives way to manifold and competing potentials (Gergen 2000). The modern subject now 'swims in the sea of uncertainty' (Bauman 1993 p.222). Increasingly people are living through the 'dissolution of self' (Gergen 2000 p.viii) and experiencing directly the shocks of dislocation and the dilemmas of identity. The technologies of social saturation are central to the contemporary erasure of individual self – 'the fully saturated self becomes no self at all.' (Gergen 2000 p.7). This social saturation brings with it a general loss in our assumption of true and knowledgeable selves (Gergen 2000). As we absorb multiple voices, we find that each 'truth' is relativised by our simultaneous consciences of compelling alternatives. We come to be aware that each truth about ourselves is a construction of the moment, true only for a given time and within certain relationships. 'The profound pattern of social change immerses us ever more deeply in the social world and exposes us more and more to the opinions, values and lifestyles of others, propelling us towards a new self-consciousness: the postmodern' (Gergen 2000 p.49).

Our identities are positioned in a 'sustained period of psychological fragmentation' (Adams 2007 p.15) as a result of the supposed nature of social and individual disintegration. Callero (2003) states that much of the postmodern scholarship rejects on philosophical grounds the very concept of the self. The personal biography becomes the blueprint for making the sense of one's life-course - a reflexive biography, an identity project (Giddens 1991). Yet individuals themselves cannot 'mean' anything; their actions are nonsensical until coordinated with the actions of

others, thus replacing an individualistic worldview with a relational worldview (Gergen 2000). There is a 'risky ambivalence' (Adams 2007) to the modern project of individualised selfhood. Set against the postmodern view of self and identity, the fundamentals of individualism are brought into question. Under postmodernism 'the processes of individual reason, intention, moral decision-making and the like – all central to the ideology of individualism – lose their status as realities' (Gergen 2000 p.241). Elliot (2008) comments on the apparent contrast between socially located and individualised theories of selfhood, where the criticism of Giddens's reflexive project of self fits too neatly with the ideology of individualism. Elliot believes that such criticism is misplaced since Giddens was at pains to underscore the interconnection between personal life and social influences. The reflexive self is not then so much self-mastering as reflexively implicated in the 'thrills and spills of social life' (Elliot 2008 p.49) and as such provides a more integrated psychosocial model of self.

Postmodernism 'poses a profound challenge to the concept of the autonomous self.' (Gergen 2000 p.156). The new self is described as diffuse, fragmented, multiple, discontinuous, momentary, impulsive (Casey 1995). 'Identities in contemporary society are increasingly fragmented as the sequestering of experiential realms is reduced - we are simultaneously workers, managers, parents, children' (Deetz 2003 p.125). The theme of multiplicity is echoed by Gergen (2000) who states 'increasingly we emerge as the possessors of many voices, each self contains a multiplicity of others' (p.83). The demands of multiple relationships split the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments leading to a 'cacophony of potential selves' which cast doubt on one's true identity. In playing out many roles as a 'social chameleon', the sense of an obdurate, core self is compromised, leading the individual to conclude that he or she is not true to one's self (Gergen 2000).

McAdams (1997) urges some caution. Contemporary theorising tends to agree that the self is more multiple than unitary, but multiplicity may have its limits. How many different selves can a person be? There is a great deal of truth in the notion that selves are multiple, fluid, ever changing and constantly on the move, especially when those selves are constructed in postmodern societal contexts. But one should not dismiss the possibility that selves nonetheless retain a certain degree of unity and coherence. The term 'selfing' locates the source of subjective experience as oneself - selfing is

responsible for human feelings of agency, the sense that one is potentially a causal agent in the world (McAdams 1997). The following are characteristics of selfhood in many modern societies: the self is viewed as a reflexive project that the individual ‘works on’; the individual works on the self in everyday life; the modern self is multilayered, possessing inner depth; the self develops over time and the developing self seeks a temporal coherence.

Callero (2003) discusses an emerging sociological understanding of the self that draws from both symbolic interactionist and postmodern themes. Although a strict convergence is unlikely, there are elements of postmodernism that can enhance the traditional symbolic interactionist understanding of the self. The developing perspective centres on power, reflexivity and social constructionism. The significance of power in shaping the self offers an important corrective to traditional sociological orientations associated with Mead and symbolic interactionism. For Foucault, the self is the direct consequence of power and can only be apprehended in terms of systems of discourse (Callero 2003). The principle of social construction is common to both new and traditional approaches of the self. The self that is socially constructed may congeal around a relatively stable set of cultural meanings but these meanings can never be permanent or unchanging. The self may appear centred, unified and singular, but this symbolic structure will be as multidimensional and diverse as the social relationships that surround it. The socially constructed self is never a bounded quality of the individual or a simple expression of psychological characteristics. It is a fundamental social phenomenon, where concepts, images, and understandings are deeply determined by relations of power.

### **Psychoanalytic Theories of Selfhood**

Several theorists approach selfhood from the inner world of the self and the emotions, desires, wishes and impulses where the relationship between self and society is one of conflict, tension and ambivalence. This approach to selfhood lies in Freud’s (1900) psychoanalytic conceptualisation of the self. The importance of early childhood experiences are paramount in understanding the adult personality (Freud 1900), particularly parental relationships and dealing with trauma; different levels of consciousness and the influence of the unconscious mind on behaviour and understanding the ‘whole’ person in relation to their past. Freud’s theories of the self

include the three stages of development (oral, anal, phallic); the libido; and three personality structures (id, superego, ego). The demands of the id (“I want it and I want it now”) and the demands of the superego (“No, its wrong”) frequently conflict. The ego deals with this conflict by operating unconscious defence mechanisms that deny or distort reality so as to protect the individual from the anxiety that would otherwise result from unresolved conflicts. Freud believed that we are constantly in a state of conflict between the id and the superego and the wishes of the individual against the demands of the environment. The superego embodies the authority of the individual’s father. The ego also asserts the environmental aspects of controlling behaviour. Freud emphasised the relationship between child and mother, with the idea of the child wanting to please his mother, who will influence the child’s later attitudes towards, and expectations of, other people. Freud saw adult personality as being largely determined by the strength of inner drives and impulses and the resolutions of these tensions within early childhood experiences. There is for Freud a radical split between the conscious and unconscious mind; the self is barred access to unconscious forms of knowing, thinking and feeling through acts of repression (Ellis 2008).

Lasch used Freud’s ideas in *The Culture of Narcissism* (1980) and contends that contemporary selfhood has now deteriorated to an antisocial preoccupation with self-image, appearance, bodily self-improvement and personal survival. Lasch (cited in Casey 1995 p.70) uses the psychoanalytic theory of narcissism to describe the character of the person in the corporate world, where people have a ‘live for the moment’ attitude and have lost a sense of self and of social belongingness. The narcissist lacks a strong sense of self but is preoccupied with his or her self. He is characterised not by love of self, but by loss of self, which for Lasch, is largely due to the decline in institutionalised authority. Narcissism, for Lasch, is the pathological condition of the modern age. Adams (2007) comments that a Laschian analysis, though flawed and partial, is a picture of a self-identity which seems to capture an important dimension of contemporary existence.

It is generally accepted that an individual’s basic personality, attitudes, values and behaviour are determined early in life, mainly through conditioning (Fromm 1994; Kets de Vries 1993). Learning is the process of conditioning as parents teach their children from birth how to behave, think, feel and perceive (Berne 1966). Our inner

patterning is largely the outcome of this early childhood conditioning and our life experience based on this conditioning (Kets de Vries 1993). 'People are products of experiences they have never relinquished' (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries 1985 p. xii). It can be argued that babies and young children, although born with certain human traits, react to stimuli by behaving in particular ways. They quickly learn the sort of behaviour that will be successful in having their needs met and so will continue with that learnt behaviour into adulthood (Goldscheider & DaVanzo 1989), unless for some reason the behaviour is unlearned. These expectations together with experiences gained from growing up tend to have a great impact on our adult behaviour and emerge in organisational life.

An individual will have specific traits, gender, abilities, physique, development aspects, motivation, attitudes, perception, social and cultural aspects and ethnic origin, which shape our sense of self (Gecas 1982). Eysenck's model (Buchanan & Huczynski 1997) of personality traits depicts personality on two dimensions – extraversion-introversion and neuroticism-stability. The introvert position (carefulness, responsibility, control, reflectiveness, unsociability, inhibition and inactivity) and being emotional stable (calm, guilt freedom, casualness, sense of health, happiness, autonomy and self-esteem).

### **Reflexivity and Habitus**

Sociology in recent years has produced two perspectives for an understanding of identity - self-reflexivity and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). A critical review of the literature concerning reflexivity and habitus is presented below which illustrates the individual and social contexts of each concept. Reflexivity is contested as a theory of human agency by the concept of habitus, although even here, reflexivity is a dimension to be considered.

Reflexivity is a central concept within the sociology of the self, a concept that has a body of critical literature that examines its' social and personal existence and value. For symbolic interactionists, the self is first and foremost a reflexive process of social interaction; reflexivity is not a biological given but emerges from the social experience (Callero 2003). A range of recent cultural and social theory appears to concur that subjects are now increasingly figured in terms of reflexivity (Adkins

2001), that is of subjects characterised not by flattening and emptying out but by a deepening of the self (Lash & Urry 1994). Such subjects are generally understood to be reflexive or 'deepened' in two senses. First, in terms of increasing abilities to reflect upon and change the norms and rules of existence and second, in terms of tendencies towards and the increasing significance of self-reflection, self-regulation and self-monitoring in the construction of identities and indeed subjects themselves. Melucci has suggested 'identity is in the process of being redefined as a pure self-reflexive capacity or self-awareness' (1996 p.36). In the context of identity, reflexivity refers to the act of an individual directing awareness towards itself; reflecting upon its own practices, preferences and even the process of reflection itself (Adams 2007). Reflexivity is a 'turning back on oneself' (Lawson 1985), to question ourselves as subjects (Soderqvist 1991). The reflexive process refers to the uniquely human capacity to become an object to one's self, to be both subject and object (Callero 2003). Postmodernism places reflexivity at the heart of the condition – 'postmodernity is a state of mind. More precisely, a state of those minds who have the habit (or is it the compulsion?) to reflect upon themselves, to search their own contents and report what they found' (Bauman 2001 p.117). Reflection is a calculative cognitive activity in which a person deliberately moves towards a particular understanding of an experience (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith 2004). Practical reflexivity is an existential questioning of our self. It can take place in the moment of action or retrospectively. It helps us 'understand ourselves, our ways of relating to others and how to participate in our social world'. (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith 2004). It allows one to know who to be, how to act and talk. It allows one to question one's beliefs and assumptions and causes one to relate to others in certain ways (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith 2004).

There are several models of reflection: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schon 1983), retrospective reflection and anticipatory reflection (van Manen 1995); reflective learning (Boyd & Fales 1983); action orientated and a dialectical process, described as 'meta thinking', thinking about thinking, which helps us to become aware of ourselves (Kemmis 1985). The self is constructed and maintained from a series of reflexive choices, 'individuals must innovate rules in a bricolage of their own identities' (Lash 1999 p.3). The individual as an active agent is implicated in their own sense of self to an unprecedented degree. Reflexivity is now understood not

simply to characterise but to be central to the constitution of the contemporary subject (Giddens 1992). This tendency to place an extended reflexivity at the heart of modern identity (Adams 2003) is most notably expressed through Giddens' account of selfhood, a comprehensive vision of an emerging process of identity in response to a number of radical social changes, suggesting an increase of reflexivity in the everyday task of being a self - 'the self today is for everyone a reflexive project' (Giddens 1992 p.30). Reflexive self-awareness provides the individual with the opportunity to construct self-identity without the shackles of tradition and culture (Adams 2003). There are two levels of reflexivity for Giddens (1990). The first is a general 'reflexive monitoring of action' which is 'characteristic of all human action' (p.36). It is the ability to reflect on what we do and as such is the basis of self-awareness. The second form, the reflexivity of 'modern social life' extends the process 'such that thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another' (p.36). Only here is reflexivity radicalised in its application to 'all aspects of human life' that 'of course includes reflection upon the nature of reflection itself'.

There are limits to reflexivity that questions the possibility of the concept. Adams (2006) identified key criticisms of the extended reflexivity thesis. These include accusations of excessive voluntarism in accounting for contemporary identity and employing a weak concept of social structure which fails to account for the restraints on agency which either persist in contemporary societies or are novel to them. For Giddens (1990), the individual is implicated in a radically reflexive relationship with social structures through new levels of relatedness. However, critics argue that little attempt is made to differentiate between experiences of people in diverse, structurally positioned settings (Hay *et al* 1996; Mestrovic 1998; O'Brien 1999 cited in Adams 2006). It is claimed to be an excessively uniform analysis which gives 'short shrift to the structural and cultural factors still at work in fashioning the self' (Tucker 1998 cited in Adams 2006 p.513). In the context of power and self-identity, Giddens acknowledges that reflexivity can facilitate uncertainty which in extreme cases can lead to pathological states such as paranoia or addiction (Giddens 1990). Here, reflexivity could be seen as a loss of power (Adams 2007). Further, a key issue is reflexivity's relation to, or refraction through, other dimensions of social existence. There may not be a lack of reflexivity per se, but a number of ways of being reflective which are performed in relation to, confined and engendered by, the particulars of

differentiated social locations (Adams 2007). It is also noted that reflexivity has not been conceived of as an unequivocal ‘good’. To do so is to apportion too much faith to the promises of choice. For some, reflexivity does not bring choice, just painful awareness of the lack of it. Reflexivity is also capable of equating to levels of anxiety and pervasive self-scrutiny (Adams 2007).

Adams (2007) presents several polarities where reflexivity can intermesh with other social phenomenon and indicates the potential positive and negative aspects of reflexivity.

Positive Pole	Negative Pole
Reflexivity as driving force behind increasing self mastery	Reflexivity restrained by reality of embodiment, relational, unconscious & emotional processes, & experiential ambiguity; & socio-cultural narratives which partially disavow reflexive capabilities
Reflexivity further disembeds individuals from cultural/social narratives & processes of stratification accepted as ‘given’ in the past	Reflexivity always operates in relation to socially differentiated habitus; more generally it is culturally contingent & contextualised rather than transcending cultural discourses
Pervasive self-scrutiny & self-awareness generates programme of self-mastery & ‘democratisation’ of relationships with others	Narcissism, anxious self-scrutiny, inner-emptiness, instrumentalism, effortfulness & related pathologies pervade weak self-identity
Contact with more choices, others, ideas, time, services & finance etc. equates to a resource from which a meaningful identity project can be reflexively constructed	Uncoupled from meaningful choices equals painful awareness of lack; possible disavowal of reflexivity & search for certainty
Extended reflexivity heralds the retreat of external government of self by prescriptive social & cultural expectations & traditions & ascendancy of choice, transparency & autonomy	Surveillance & self-surveillance as related elements of ‘trap’. Reflexivity re-imagined as closely governed imposition which regulates & constructs selves; a technique of self inculcated via discourse of self-mastery & self-actualisation

Figure 1: Experiential Poles of a Qualified Concept of Reflexivity

Source: Adams, M., ‘Self & Social Change’ Sage 2007 p.162

Despite the relatively consistent presence of reflexivity in social theory, it is a contested concept in the sense that Bourdieu’s theory offers an alternative from which identity can be constructed. Bourdieu (1977) centred his influential account of human social behaviour on the concept of habitus, the set of dispositions inculcated in each of



us by the conditioning that follows from our social environment (Elder-Vass 2007). The habitus tends to encourage us to behave in ways that reproduce the existing practices and hence the existing structure of society. This conditioning is so effective that the dispositions it generates are below consciousness. This is illustrated by Bourdieu's explanation of accents that tend to reflect our social origins. The various characteristics of the habitus are enacted unthinkingly; that is partly what defines them as habitual (Adams 2006). The habitus is fundamentally an embodied phenomenon. It signifies not just how we think about the world but the bodily 'system of dispositions': 'a way of walking, a tilt of the head, facial expressions, ways of sitting, a style of speech' (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Adams 2006). Though thoroughly individualised, the habitus reflects a shared cultural context. For Bourdieu, 'the body is a mnemonic device upon which the basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded in a socialising or learning process which commences during early childhood' (Jenkins 1992 cited in Adams 2006). Bourdieu stresses the generative nature of habitus, engendering countless practices that reconstitute it in a loop of agency and structure. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus has been criticised for being overly deterministic (Adams 2006). Bourdieu does allow for the possibility of reflexivity, where paradoxically, the reflective process is itself a form of habitus. Jenkins argues that what appears to be reflexivity is in fact 'part of the repertoire of the habitus, not in any sense, an autonomous or chosen process' (Jenkins 1992 p.77 cited in Adams 2007). Indeed, for Bourdieu, reflexivity is an epistemological principle which advises sociologists to turn their objectification gaze upon themselves and become aware of the hidden assumptions that structure their research (Karakayali 2004).

Bourdieu's theory has been criticised on two fronts by Elder-Vass (2007). Bourdieu argues that the habitus provides a creative, active capacity, one that does not necessarily involve conscious deliberation. The criticism here is that the omission of conscious thought from the development of our dispositions is clearly untenable as a general claim. A more significant objection can be made to the suggestion that the operation of habitus is subconscious, where several authors have criticised Bourdieu for his apparent denial of conscious decision making in the determination of human behaviour.

Although these are apparently opposing concepts, attempts have been made to build on critical findings and several hybridised accounts of reflexivity and habitus have emerged in social theory (Adams 2006; Elder-Vass 2007). There are a number of these accounts in relation to social change (McNay 1999; Adkins 2001; Sweetman 2003) where a more complex portrayal of an embedded, embodied and contradictory reflexivity emerges (Adams 2007). The extended process of reflexivity is placed at the heart of modern identity by several social theorists, yet culture could still play an important part in shaping identity (Adams 2003). The relationship between language, culture and reflexivity can be utilised in establishing a critique for how culture is designated in the constitution of the contemporary self. By potentially repositioning self-identity in its connection to culture, the overall bearing of reflexivity upon the processes of self-identity is questioned. 'It is argued that a culturally-situated account of self-identity is a necessary analytical and normative alternative' (Adams 2003 p.221). In imagining an unbounded reflexivity, it overlooks many crucial factors in identity formation. Adams (2003) argues that reflexive thinking is always bounded, if not exhausted, by the culture and society we are part of, particularly the language systems which historically have come to structure our sense of self. Mead's theory is critiqued to reveal a disjunctive account of social reality, a separation of self and social context. Culture and society are implicated in the formation of self-identity: they 'lie at its heart' (Adams 2003 p.234). Notions of reflexivity are a product of culture – the concept of a reflexive project of selfhood is as much a product of social and cultural interactions as any other; it does not transcend them. A version of self-identity would include reflexivity and the social, as well as the role of the unconscious, the irrational, the emotional and self-ambiguity as culturally refracted (Adams 2003).

## **Change**

### **Organisational Change**

Changes in economic, political, global and social environments are inevitable aspects of organisational and personal life (Kanter, Stein & Jick 1997). According to Burnes (2004) change is an ever present feature of organisational life, both at an operational and strategic level. Change is defined as 'the process of continually renewing an organisation's direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers' (Moran & Brightman 2001 p.111). However,

organisations are designed to work, not to change (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998). Change means destabilising the existing state. The more stable this is the more difficult change will be. Further complications arise through the need for speed so that organisations can respond faster than their competitors (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). Consequently, organisational change cannot be separated from organisational strategy or vice versa (Burnes 2004). Since the need for change is often unpredictable, it tends to be reactive, discontinuous and triggered by an organisational crisis (Burnes 2004).

Several theories describe a typical pattern of events that occur from the beginning of a change to the end. Lewin's (1951) force field theory described three phases during the change process - unfreezing, changing and refreezing. This moved people through the stages of realising that the 'old ways' of doing things are no longer adequate, to looking for new ways of doing things and selecting an approach to finally implementing and establishing the new approach. All three phases are important, and little will be achieved if the first phase of unfreezing is met with resistance (Pawson 1994) or apathy. Hatch (1997) says that Lewin's model was more a theory of stability than of change because he defined change as transient stability interrupting an otherwise stable equilibrium.

Kanter, Stein and Jick claim that change is both 'ubiquitous and multidirectional' (cited in Hatch 1997 p.356) and is more or less continuous. Change occurs at three levels – environment, organisation and individual. At the environmental level, the authors identify macro evolutionary forces for change that come from the behaviour of other organisations. At the organisational level, micro evolutionary forces for change are brought about through progress through the organisational lifecycle with implications drawn from the size and age of an organisation and associated problems of growth or decline. At the individual level, political forces for change that stem from struggles of power and control influence activity sets as well. Whilst this theory is considerably more complex than other change theories, Hatch (1997) claims that the theory is not as dynamic as the authors claim, mainly because it is a framework for combining other theories and that the focus is on broad patterns of organisational change rather than on change at the level of ordinary everyday life in organisations.

Pendlebury, Grouard and Meston (1998) identified five dimensions of change - strategy, structure, systems, culture and management style. These reflect the physical and psychological components of the organisation and are all closely intertwined and affected by change. Several driving forces for change are identified, including external forces such as market influences, competitor actions, technological innovations and changes in social behaviour and attitudes and internal forces such as business growth, development and management vision. There are also tremendous variations in the depth, speed and the way in which changes are instigated. These can range from superficial to profound changes implemented over a short or longer period of time given the importance to the organisation of the required change. The ten keys to successful change management are:

Key 1	<b>Defining The Vision:</b> establishing the overall objective of change and outlining the way in which it will be implemented
Key 2	<b>Mobilising:</b> creating a dynamic for change among employees, evaluating the issues raised by the vision and specifying the main directions for improvement as a consequence
Key 3	<b>Catalysing:</b> defining the project structure and how it will work in supporting, facilitating and accelerating change
Key 4	<b>Steering:</b> defining and carrying out the set of actions which will guide the process of change and keep it on course
Key 5	<b>Delivering:</b> implementing the changes by realising the vision in terms of the day to day operation of the business i.e. altering structures, methods, attitudes and culture in order to produce the anticipated quantitative and qualitative result
Key 6	<b>Obtaining participation:</b> ensuring that all employees affected by change participate, in order both to enhance the vision and to ease its implementation
Key 7	<b>Handling the emotional dimension:</b> overcoming resistance and mental blockages, so that change can be delivered
Key 8	<b>Handling the power issues:</b> redirecting power relations to bring them into line with the vision so that they contribute positively to the process of change
Key 9	<b>Training and coaching:</b> providing training in both technical and interpersonal skills, to help employees maximise their contribution to the process of change and subsequently incorporate the vision into their everyday working life
Key 10	<b>Communicating actively:</b> initiating and coordinating a communication explosion, to encourage universal participation and involvement and hence to promote change

Figure 2: Ten Keys to Successful Change Management

Source: Pendlebury, J., Grouard, B., Mesto, F.,  
Successful Change Management Wiley, 1998, p.xviii

Kotter (1998) discusses how some organisations have successfully changed and some have failed. The successful cases show that change moves through several phases over

a considerable period of time and an eight-stage process of creating major change is outlined:

1	<b>Establishing a sense of urgency</b> * examining the market and competitive realities * identifying & discussing crises, potential crisis or major opportunities
2	<b>Creating the guiding coalition</b> * putting together a group with enough power to lead the change * getting the group to work together like a team
3	<b>Developing a vision and strategy</b> * creating a vision to help direct the change effort * developing strategies for achieving that vision
4	<b>Communicating the change vision</b> * using every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision & strategies * having the guided coalition role model the behaviour expected of employees
5	<b>Empowering broad based action</b> * getting rid of obstacles * changing systems or structures that undermine the change vision * encouraging risk taking & non-traditional ideas, activities & actions
6	<b>Generating short term wins</b> * planning for visible improvements in performance or 'wins' * creating those wins * visibly recognising & rewarding people who make the wins possible
7	<b>Consolidating gains and producing more change</b> * using increased credibility to change all systems, structures & policies that don't fit together & don't fit the transforming vision * hiring, promoting & developing people who can implement the change vision * reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes & change agents
8	<b>Anchoring new approaches in the culture</b> * creating better performance through customer & productivity oriented behaviour, more & better leadership & more effective management * articulating the connection between new behaviours & organisational success * developing means to ensure leadership development & succession

Figure 3: Eight Stage Process of Creating Major Change

Source: Kotter, J. P., (1996) Leading Change. Harvard. p.21

It is important for any change to be successful to go through all eight stages. Multiple phases can be conducted at the same time, and there may be projects within projects that will develop and contribute to the overall change program. Invariably, because of

the multiple steps and multiple projects, the end result can be 'complex, dynamic, messy and scary' (Kotter 1996 p.25).

Senior (2002) identified that change can be characterised in three ways - by the rate of occurrence, by how it comes about and by scale.

In terms of the rate of occurrence, it is argued that it is of vital importance for organisations that people are able to undergo continuous change (Burnes 2004). Leifer (1989) perceives change as a normal and natural response to internal and environmental conditions. Five types of change characterised by the rate of occurrence are identified – discontinuous, incremental, bumpy incremental, continuous and bumpy continuous change.

In terms of change characterised by how it comes about, the literature is dominated by planned and emergent change (Bamford & Forrester 2003). The planned approach to change has come under increasing criticism for a number of reasons, including not being applicable to situations that require rapid and transformational change (Burnes 2004; Senior 2002) and that it is based on the assumptions that organisations operate under constant conditions and that they can move in a pre-planned manner from one stable state to another (Bamford & Forrester 2003). Consequently, the emergent approach has gained ground. Rather than seeing change to be top-down driven, the emergent approach tends to see change driven from the bottom up (Bamford & Forrester 2003; Burnes 2004). The approach suggests change is so rapid that it is impossible for senior managers to effectively identify, plan and implement the necessary organisational response and the responsibility of organisational change has to become increasingly devolved (By 2005). The emergent approach to change emphasised that change should not be perceived as a series of linear events within a given time period but as a continuous process of adaption to changing circumstances (Burnes 2004). It is the uncertainty of both the external and internal environments that makes this approach more pertinent than the planned approach (Bamford & Forrester 2003).

There are criticisms of the emergent approach. As it is relatively new, it is argued it lacks coherence and a diversity of techniques (Bamford & Forrester 2003). It also

consists of a rather disparate group of models and approaches (Bamford & Forrester 2003). However, Burnes (1996) argues that the emergent model is suitable for all organisations, all situations and at all times. Dunphy and Stace (1993) argue that managers need a model of change that is essentially a situational or contingency model. They advocate an approach that reflects organisations operations in ever changing environments and that there are a range of approaches to change.

In terms of characterising change by scale, there are four characteristics that range from fine-tuning, usually at a relatively low level within the organisation, through incremental adjustment, modular transformation and up to corporate transformation (Nelson 2003).

Change is inextricably linked with leadership. Yukl declared that 'leading change is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities' (1998 p.438) and argues that change is the essence of leadership. Leaders 'change the way people think about what is desirable, possible and necessary' (Zaleznik 1977 p.71). Leadership cannot be separated from change and all change requires and heightens the need for leadership (Adair 1990). The difference between leaders and managers is in the orientation to change (Kotter 1996). Management is concerned with the present and does not concern itself with purpose and organisational identity. Those who attempt to create major change with simple, linear, analytic processes almost always fail. The reason for this is that we are taught to manage and not to lead. Kotter (1996) distinguishes between 'managing change' and 'leading change':

'managing change is important. Without competent management, the transformation process can get out of control. But for most organisations, the much bigger challenge is leading change. Only leadership can blast through the many sources of corporate inertia. Only leadership can motivate the actions needed to alter behaviour in any significant way. Only leadership can get change to stick by anchoring it in the very culture of an organisation' (Kotter 1996 p.30)

To support change, instrumental leadership (Nadler & Tushman 1990) focused on ensuring individuals in the senior team and throughout the organisation behaved in ways in which change could occur. This involved structuring, controlling and rewarding and what can be described as 'mundane behaviours' (Nadler & Tushman 1990 p.86) such as setting agendas for meetings, asking questions, following up and allocating time. Instrumental leadership is needed to ensure compliance with the

commitment generated by charismatic leadership. Nadler suggested that for the achievement of change, both charismatic and instrumental leadership is needed – they are complementary. This will create a dilemma for the individual who is adept at one approach but not the other – only exceptional individuals can handle the behavioural requirements of both leadership styles.

Battilana *et al* (2010) state that managers' likelihood to emphasise each of the different activities involved in planned organisational change implementation (namely communicating the need for change, mobilising others to support the change and evaluating the change implementation) varies with their mix of leadership competencies (namely their effectiveness at task-oriented and person-oriented behaviours). This suggests that treating planned organisational change as a generic phenomenon might mask important idiosyncrasies of both the activities involved in the change implementation process and the unique functions leadership competencies might play in the execution of these activities.

There is growing evidence that change agents' leadership characteristics and behaviours influence the success or failure of organisational change initiatives (Battilana *et al* 2010). Most of the leadership studies that account for the relationship between leadership and change do not, however, account for the complexity of intra-organisational processes (Yukl 1999), including the complexity of the organisational change implementation process which involves different activities.

Several organisational scholars (Kanter; 1983; Schein, 1987; Kotter, 1996) adopted a change agent, leader-centric focus on change by emphasising the strategic nature of transformational leadership including the creation of inspiring visions (Burns 1978). Research on charismatic, cultural and transformational leadership indicates that a clear and compelling vision is beneficial in guiding change in an organisation (Yukl 1998). This step is crucial to the whole change programme. It is part of the role of senior management, along with building a coalition of supporters who endorse the change strategy and provide the guidance to enable the changes to take place. There are four stages of organisational change under transformational leadership (Lussier & Achua 2004; Yukl 1989). First, it is necessary



to make a compelling case for change. The transformational leader helps to bring about change by making a convincing case for it. This characteristically involves heightening followers' sensitivity to environmental changes and challenges and questioning the status quo. Second, it is important to inspire a shared vision, seeking broad input, and encouraging everyone to think of a new and better future. This needs to be cast in ideological rather than just economic terms. Third, change needs to be led. A sense of urgency must be instilled. Collaboration has to be encouraged and the self-confidence of followers' must be increased. In effect, it is vital to create an environment conducive to the creation and sharing of knowledge (Bryant 2003). It is also necessary at this stage to deal with the emotional resistance that typically accompanies change and this may be achieved through careful recognition of the individual needs of employees and/or followers. Finally, change needs to be embedded. This is achieved by, for example, monitoring progress, changing appraisal and reward systems, and hiring staff with a commitment to collaboration. Together these should also empower followers to help achieve the organisation's objectives. What leaders pay attention to, what they measure and how they measure it, and what they control (Carlson & Perrewe 1995) are critical factors in transforming an organisation's culture and embedding new ways of thinking and acting. Dubrin (2001) says that 'the transformational leader ...(helps) group members understand the need for change both emotionally and intellectually' and Gill (2003) presents an integrative model of leadership for successful change based upon the leaders transformative skills of vision, values, strategy, empowerment and inspiration.

Despite the various approaches to manage and lead the change process, there are many reasons why change is resisted. These include not establishing a great enough sense of urgency; not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition; lacking a vision; under communicating the vision; not removing obstacles to the new vision; not systematically planning for and creating short term wins; declaring victory too soon; not anchoring changes in the culture of the organisation; an inwardly focused culture, paralysing bureaucracy, parochial politics, a low level of trust, lack of teamwork, arrogant attitudes: a lack of leadership; the general human fear of the unknown. (Kotter 1996); a belief that change is unnecessary and not feasible, economic threats, the relative high cost, a fear of personal failure, a loss of status and power, a threat to values and ideas and a resentment of interference (Connor 1995).

Resistance to change can stem from both the individual as well as from the social and organisational context (George & Jones 2001). Resistance can be a natural reaction by people who want to protect their self-interests and sense of self-determination. Alternatively, this could be viewed as energy and emotional strength that could be redirected to improve the change process. Pawson (1994) states that resistance to change has been identified as resulting from one or a combination of the following factors: substantive change in job, reduction in economic security or job displacement, psychological threats, disruption of social arrangements and lowering of status. A major change in the nature of work and the skills required to perform certain functions is likely to engender distrust and resistance, particularly where employees are not informed of the change prior to implementation.

As leadership is acutely sensitive to context there can be no universal rules for leading change (Pettigrew & Whipp 1993), although there have been attempts to determine the leadership approach appropriate for particular forms of change (Burnes 2004), for example, transactional leadership for small scale change in relatively stable environments and transformational leadership for large scale change in turbulent environments (Burnes 2004).

### **A Changing Self**

Employees will be required to respond to change on individual and group levels and the effectiveness of the process will depend on their willingness to change (Burnes 2004). Organisations are a collective group of persons whose behaviours within the workplace reflect their personal histories and experiences. Our actions tend to have an internal rationality, which reflects our individual biographies. In view of this, it is difficult to see how a leader can operate effectively without having some understanding of his/her own psychodynamics together with those of organisational actors. Organisations are continually subjected to change and change inevitably provokes negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, guilt or embarrassment. These emotions play a key role in shaping organisational order so the psycho-dynamics of individuals should not be ignored (Armstrong 2004; French & Vince 1999; Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 1985). As a leader, it is necessary to understand the nature of anxieties at both conscious and unconscious levels, which arise from change and to

manage these to overcome resistances to the process (French & Vince 1999). As stated earlier, change inevitably provokes anxieties and people avoid such anxieties by not thinking about them and adopting social defences (Hirschhorn 1988).

George and Jones (2001) proposed a model that focused on change at the individual level of analysis, recognising that change is initiated and carried out by individuals in organisations where organisations only change and act through their members. Change is fundamentally about people and the role of people as the creators and perpetrators of organisations is crucial (George & Jones 2001). Particular relevance is given to the role of schemas, defined as abstract cognitive features that contain knowledge about a kind of stimulus or concept (Fiske & Taylor 1991), in understanding individual change in organisations. At the heart of change is a change in members' beliefs, interpretive schemes and behaviours (Porras & Robertson 1992). Galpin (1996) described the importance of leveraging the combined energies and talents of groups of people and to engage these teams in thinking about change, working with the 'soft' side of change. The emphasis on change to date has been through technical, economic and operational means. While this is important, it is now critical to turn our attention to the human element involved in change. Mulligan and Barber (1998) speak of the yin and yang of change: respectively the social and emotional considerations (leadership) and the technical aspects (management).

The theme of individual change in the literature is continued by Wirth (2004) who discusses organisational change through influencing individual change. Research in the field of psychology provides a strongly supported model of individual change (Prochaska *et al.* 2001). This model identifies four stages in the individual change process – precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action or actually changing, and maintenance. Research has identified it is necessary for the individual to change his/her behaviour, values or frameworks for successful organisational change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010).

Change management literature is somewhat focused on the negative emotions that threaten change efforts (Diamond 1993) although some authors have argued that change can trigger an immense gamut of emotion, including positive emotion such as hope, anticipation and faith in a better future (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel 2001).

The context of work is a crucial domain for the development of personal identities (Hogg & Terry 2000). The increasingly complex and dynamic working environments require organisational members to reconcile competing demands and expectations which impact on their sense of self (Galpin & Sims 1999). As part of their making sense of change, organisational members engage in identity work i.e. the ‘forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness’ (Svenigsson & Alvesson 2003) examining how organisational change affects their professional development and future career. This allows organisational members to satisfy their need for meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) and maintain their concepts of self and adequate levels of self-esteem (Brown & Starkey 2000). Reissner (2010) investigated how organisational change can affect the development of personal identities using a narrative approach. It is suggested that organisational change affects the personal identities of those involved through the way in which actors expectations are being met, exceeded or disappointed. The conclusion is that changes in the work environment can result in major revisions to organisational actors’ selves and their stories that give meaning to past experiences and future expectations. In an account of his leadership in a change situation, Eriksen (2008) states that changing oneself by managing change process as a leader, one has to become the change process in order to be successful. Meaningful organisational transformation does not occur without a corresponding self-transformation, most importantly the individual leading the change. To effectively facilitate organisational change, ‘I found that I had to see myself, accept myself and to be(come) the change I wanted to see’ (Quinn *et al* 2000 p.42).

## **Leadership**

When I reviewed the leadership literature, I realised the extensive nature of the subject and the number of definitions that had been applied over time which made it clear that there is not a universal definition of leadership. Stogdill (1974) concluded that ‘there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept’ (p.259). More recently, Bennis and Nanus (2003) discovered 850 definitions of leadership when researching for their book ‘The Leaders Strategies for Taking Charge’ and Winston and Patterson (2006) referred to a search

of the Expanded Academic Database of published articles for the term 'leadership' returned over 26,000 articles. Today, the field of leadership focuses not only on the leader, but also followers, peers, supervisors, work setting/context and culture, including a much broader array of individuals representing the entire spectrum of diversity, public, private and not-for-profit organisations (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009). Defining leadership for research purposes is no easy task, since the term, so common in our vocabulary, imagination, and history, conveys extraneous associations that relate to other complex phenomena, such as power, influence, control and authority (Yukl 2010). The multiplicity of definitions mean different things to different people, such as those that hold leadership positions, those that show the behaviour and those concerned with the process (Bradshaw 2002). The lack of agreement and consensus on the subject of leadership is indicative of the complexity of the concept and demonstrates that there are many factors that influence people's views. Leadership is the most studied and least understood topic in all the social sciences (Bennis & Nanus 1985).

The scope of leadership knowledge spans over 2000 years of writing and the concept has attracted new interpretations and theories throughout the centuries. This review traces the theoretical developments in leadership literature, beginning with early classical models (Grint 1997) and moving towards the present day. None of the generations of leadership theory is mutually exclusive or totally time-bound (van Maurik 2003); 'it is quite possible for elements of one generation to crop up much later in the writings of someone who would not normally think of himself as being of that school. Consequently it is fair to say that each generation has added something to the overall debate on leadership and that the debate continues' (van Maurik 2001).

The review sets a context for and depicts the theoretical depth that sits behind, transformational and transactional leadership theories (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006), those that my primary research findings will be reflected against. Following this contextual review, a critical analysis of the theories of transformational and transactional leadership is presented and supported by the associated leadership concepts of organisational culture, the role of influence and

power and organisational psychodynamics. The review concludes with a review of the literatures pertaining to leadership and self (Neck, Manz, Godwin 1999).

### **Classical Leadership Theories**

Early historical models of leadership, referred to as classical (Grint 1997) include three writers from different periods in history – Plato, Sun Tzu and Machiavelli – and each set their work against backgrounds of war or conflict or impending strife. Plato's *The Republic*, probably the first serious attempt to construct systematic theory of politics and leadership, was published over 2000 years ago, and includes relevant thoughts regarding leadership for today's observers (Grint 1997). This is the original defence of expertise as the basis for leadership. The issue of whether leadership skills can be taught is also raised. Sun Tzu, a successful military philosopher, wrote *The Art of War* sometime between the fifth and third centuries BC (Grint 1997). The central message is fundamentally about the role of leadership. The doctrine denounces those that seek war and details strategies to avoid it or conclude it quickly. Machiavelli's *The Prince* was first drafted in 1513, where his plea to leadership is not to act immorally but to consider the inefficacy of acting morally in an immoral world (Grint 1997). Machiavelli's advice is not that the end justifies the means but that 'one must consider the final result'. It is not the case that the end justifies any means but that a good end justifies any means.

### **The Scientific Management & Human Relations Movements**

The focus of the leader in the scientific management movement was on the needs of the organisation, where output could be increased by improving working methods (Taylor 1911) and the function of the leader was to set up and enforce performance criteria to meet organisational goals. In the human relations movement (Mayo 1945), the focus of the leader was on individual needs. As well as finding the best technological methods to improve output, it was beneficial to management to look into human affairs. The organisation was to be developed around the workers and had to take into account human feelings and attitudes.

### **Great Man Theory**

The 'great man' theory of leadership (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) is based strongly on historical figures, and assumes that men and women who displayed great vision, personality and competence rose to leadership positions. The rise to power of

‘great men’ was rooted in a heroic set of personal talents, skills and physical characteristics (Heifetz 1994).

### **Trait Leadership Theories**

Trait theories of leadership (Stogdill 1974; Bennis 1984; Yukl 1998) assume that leaders are born and not made. Leadership consists of certain inherited characteristics, or personality traits, which distinguish leaders from their followers. The term trait refers to a variety of individual attributes, including aspects of personality, temperament, needs, motives and values (Yukl 1998). In this approach, leaders cannot be trained and therefore must be selected. Although early surveys of traits (Stogdill 1948) identified personality characteristics that appeared to differentiate leaders from followers, more recent research (Wright 1996) ‘found no differences between leaders and followers with respect to these characteristics’. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) list the traits which they say do matter – drive, motivation, honesty, integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, knowledge of the business, charisma, creativity, originality, flexibility. Stogdill (1974) identified the traits that differentiate leaders from non-leaders – adaptable, alert, ambitious, assertive, cooperative, decisive, dependable, dominant, energetic, persistent, self-confident, tolerant and willing to assume responsibility. Bennis (1984) identified four common traits shared by leaders – management of attention, management of meaning, management of trust and management of self. Yukl (1998) summarised the relevant aspects of personality for effective leadership – high energy level, stress tolerance, self-confidence, internal locus of control orientation, emotional maturity, personal integrity, socialised power motivation, moderately high achievement orientation and a low need for affiliation. Further research has suggested that traits are important as ‘perceiver constructs’ (Lord & Maher 1991 in Bryman 1996) i.e. traits influence how people are perceived.

### **Style (Behavioural) Leadership Theories**

In the 1950’s, researchers turned to what leaders did – how they behaved, especially to their followers. They moved from leaders to leadership, with different patterns of behaviour grouped together and labelled as style (or behavioural) theories of leadership. Style theory generally suggests that leaders vary in the degree of involvement allowed to subordinates, varying from an autocratic style to a democratic style. Handy (1993 p.101) referred to these as structuring and supportive styles. The Ohio State University Studies (Stogdill 1957) established the importance of the task

and people dimensions of success. Two factors emerged from the results. First, consideration - indicating a concern by the leader for subordinate welfare, respect and rapport with them; second, initiating structure – reflects the degree to which the leader is task focused, emphasising the achievement of objectives. The behaviour of a leader could be described as any mix of both dimensions. Likert (1967) identified four systems (styles) of leadership - exploitative autocratic, benevolent autocratic, participative and democratic. The least successful departments were the first two systems and the most successful were the latter two systems. Blake and Mouton (1964) produced a systematic approach based on a grid that identified generic leadership being a function of a concern for people and a concern for production. Blake and McCauley (1991) identify five main leadership styles in their Leadership Grid based on concern for production (task) and concern for people (relationship). The spectrum moved from ‘impoverished management’, the least desirable style, to ‘team management’, where work is accomplished from committed people with a ‘common stake’ in the organisation purpose leading to relationships of trust and respect. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) utilised concepts of boss-centred leadership and subordinate-centred leadership to describe the differences in leadership styles within their model which expresses the balance between managerial authority and freedom for subordinates. Four main styles were identified - tells (autocratic), sells (persuasive), consults (consulting) and joins (democratic). This model leans towards the contingency approach to leadership in recognising that success in any particular context depends upon a range of factors, effectively creating the need for an appropriate match between situational need, employee expectation and preferred style of leader.

### **Contingency (Situational) Leadership Theories**

Contingency (or situational) theory attempts to add value by incorporating a wider range of variables into the equation, suggesting that the most appropriate style of leadership is contingent on a range of variables, for instance the situation, the people, the task, the organisation and other environmental factors, from the context within which the leadership will be exercised (Bryman 1996 p.279). Fiedler’s (1967) contingency theory postulates that there is no single best way for managers to lead. Situations will create different leadership style requirements for a manager and the solution to a managerial situation is contingent on the factors that impinge on that



situation. Fiedler's work reflects the view that success is a function of the interaction between the relationships in the workplace, the task to be achieved, the relative power balance between leader and led and the preferred style of the leader. Hersey and Blanchard's Situation Approach (1977) is based on two different sets of leader behaviour: task behaviour (the degree to which the leader provides an output-focused perspective for the group) and relationship behaviour (the amount of support, encouragement and two-way communication that the leader engages in). When the situation variable of subordinate readiness is added to the model, four actual styles emerge: telling, selling, participating and delegating, which are all dependent on the readiness of the subordinate towards achieving the task, with the delegating style representing a facilitation role rather than managerial. The path-goal model of leadership links leader behaviour with subordinate motivation, performance and satisfaction (House & Mitchell 1974). This theory postulates that subordinate motivation will be improved if the expectation that positive rewards will be forthcoming is likely to be realised. House identified four styles of leader behaviour – directive leadership, supportive leadership, participative leadership and achievement-oriented leadership. This contingency approach is based on the notion that individual leaders are capable of changing their style to match the needs of the situation. The Vroom and Yetten (1973) model, and subsequently expanded by Vroom and Jago (1988), is based on the assumption that situational variables interacting with personal attributes or characteristics of the leader result in leader behaviour that can affect organisational effectiveness. The model is based on two aspects of a leader's decision: its quality and its acceptance, with a third consideration being the amount of time required to make the decision.

### **New Leadership Theories**

In the early 1980's, a number of alternative leadership approaches emerged which shared some common features, collectively referred to by Bryman as the 'new leadership era' (Bryman 1997). These models emphasised symbolic leader behaviour; visionary, inspirational messages; influencing; emotional feelings; ideological and moral values; individualised attention and intellectual stimulation. Definitions included the following: 'the process of influencing the activities of an organised group toward goal achievement' (Rauch & Behling 1984 p.46); 'the ability to step outside the culture, to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive' (Schein

1997 p.2); ‘about articulating visions, embodying values and creating the environment within which things can be accomplished’ (Richards & Engle 1986 p.206); ‘the active promotion of values which provide shared meanings about the nature of the organisation’ (Bryman 1997 p.277). The leader is a ‘manager of meaning’ (Smircich & Morgan 1982), who defines organisational reality for others (Bryman 1997), engaging in ‘sense making’ (Pfeffer 1981), changing the way people think about what is desirable, possible and necessary (Zaleznik 1977); ‘the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor’ (DePree 1998 p.130); ‘leaders articulate and define what has previously remained implicit or unsaid: they invent images, metaphors and models that provide a focus for new attention. An essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organise meaning for the members of the organisation’ (Bennis & Nanus 1986 p.39). The new approaches signalled a new phase of thinking that contrasted sharply with previous concepts, a move articulated by Bennis and Nanus (1998) who presented a likely model of leadership in the twenty first century (Figure 3):

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
Few leaders, mainly at the top, many managers	Leaders at every level, fewer managers
Leading by goal setting e.g. ROI	Leading by vision – new directions for longer term business growth
Downsizing, benchmarking for low cost, high quality	Also creating domains of uniqueness, distinctive competencies
Reactive/adaptive to change	Anticipative/futures creative
Designer of hierarchical organisations	Designer of flatter, distributed. More collegial organisations; leader a social architect
Directing & supervising individuals	Empowering & inspiring individuals, but also facilitating teamwork
Information held by few decision makers	Information shared with many, both internally and with outside partners
Leader as boss, controlling processes & behaviours	Leader as coach, creating learning organisations
Leader as stabilizer, balancing conflicting demands and maintaining the culture	Leader as change agent, creating agenda for change, balancing risks & evolving the culture & the technology base
Leader responsible for developing good managers	Leader also responsible for developing future leaders; serving as leader of leaders

Figure 4: Likely Model of Twenty-First-Century Leadership

Source: Bennis, W. & Nanus, B. (1998) ‘Toward the New Millennium’

The field of leadership continues to evolve and focuses not only on the leader, but also on followers, peers, work setting/context and culture. Leadership is no longer simply described as an individual characteristic or difference, but rather is depicted in various models as dyadic, shared, relational, strategic, global, and a complex social dynamic (Avolio 2007; Yukl 2006).

### **Charismatic Leadership**

According to House (1977), a charismatic leader is likely to have a strong need for power, high self-confidence and a strong conviction in their beliefs and ideals. Charismatic leaders possess strategic vision and have an incredible ability to motivate followers to achieve ambitious goals. Charismatic leaders also tend to be involved in radical transformation of large organisations as well as the creation of successful entrepreneurial enterprises (Conger & Kanungo 1988). The followers of a charismatic leader perceive that the leader's beliefs are correct, accept the leader without question, obey the leader willingly, feel affection toward the leader, are emotionally involved in the mission of the group or organisation and have high performance standards (House 1977). Research has reviewed the character of charismatic leaders and identified negative and positive charismatics (Conger 1989 cited in Yukl 1998). Problems are likely in organisations led by negative charismatics, but some may occur with positive charismatics as well. Negative charismatics are often narcissists who lack a genuine concern for the welfare of other people leading to poor interpersonal relationships; impulsive, unconventional behaviour can offend and antagonise people; many charismatics tend to focus on the big picture and neglect the details of daily operations; and the same optimism and self-confidence that is essential to influence others to support the leader's vision may also result in failure by the leader to recognise flaws in the vision. Some writers (Bryman 1992; Schein cited in Yukl 1998) have criticised charismatic leadership as a panacea for solving problems in organisations. It can be risky, power is often mis-used and radical change may be inappropriate for organisations that are already successful. Most of the research (Yukl 1998) on effective leaders suggests that charisma is not necessary to achieve major changes in an organisation and improve its performance. Successful changes in these studies were usually the result of transformational leadership by managers not

perceived as charismatic, an observation that will be pertinent to the review of transformational and transactional leadership later in this chapter.

### **Servant Leadership**

Building on the work of Greenleaf (1998), Spears (2004) listed ten characteristics of the servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community. Servant leaders prioritise the needs and provide support for participants to function at their best – ‘the servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?’ (Spears 1998 p.3). The servant leader advocates a group-oriented approach to analysis and decision-making and emphasises the power of persuasion and seeking consensus. Trust and empowerment are two important ingredients in creating the right environment for this leadership approach to succeed with employees being empowered and contributing to the vision of the organisation.

### **Authentic Leadership**

One of the recent emerging leadership areas has been called authentic leadership. Luthens and Avolio (2003) have defined authentic leadership as ‘a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organisational context, which results in greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development’ (p.243). This definition was defined at the outset as multilevel in that it included the leader, follower and context. Alternative definitions were offered (Cooper *et al* 2005; Sparrowe 2005) and there appears to be general agreement in the literature on four factors that cover the components of authentic leadership: balanced processing (objectively analysing relevant data before making a decision); internalised moral perspective (being guided by internal moral standards); relational transparency (presenting one’s authentic self through openly sharing information and feelings as appropriate for situations); and self-awareness (the demonstrated understanding of one’s strengths, weaknesses and the way one makes sense of the world). Ladkin and Taylor (2010) argue that although authentic leadership may be rooted in the notion of a ‘true self’, it is through the embodiment of that true self that leaders are perceived as

authentic or not. Three components of how authentic leadership is created are proposed: self-exposure, relating and making leaderly choices. More generally, work on defining and measuring authentic leadership is in the very early stages of development.

### **Complexity Leadership**

Complexity leadership theory focuses on enabling the learning, creative, and adaptive capacity of complex adaptive systems within a context of knowledge-producing organisations. This conceptual framework includes three entangled leadership roles - adaptive leadership, administrative leadership and enabling leadership - that reflect a dynamic relationship between the bureaucratic, administrative functions of the organisation and the emergent, informal dynamics of complex adaptive systems (Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey 2007). According to complex systems leadership theory 'leadership can be enacted through any interaction in an organisation...leadership is an emergent phenomenon within complex systems' (Hazy 2007 p.2). Complexity leadership posits that to achieve optimal performance, organisations cannot be designed with simple, rationalised structures that underestimate the complexity of the content in which the organisation must function and adapt (Uhl-Bien *et al* 2007). There is a lack of substantive research in the complexity leadership field (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009), possibly because of the difficulties in assessing this type of emergent construction within a dynamically changing context.

### **Shared or Collective Leadership**

There is more evidence for shared or collective leadership in organisations as hierarchical levels are deleted and team based structures inserted (Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009). According to Day *et al* (2004), team and shared leadership capacity is an emergent state, something dynamic that develops through a team's lifespan and that varies based on the inputs, processes and outcomes of the team. It produces patterns of reciprocal influence which reinforce and develops further relationships between team members (Carson *et al* 2007). The most widely cited definition of shared leadership is that of Pearce and Conger (2003): 'a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organisational goals. This influence process often involves peer or lateral influence and at times involves upward or downward

hierarchical influence' (p.1). However, there is a lack of agreement on its definition (Carson *et al* 2007), with for example the question should there be a generic definition of shared leadership that is qualified by such terms as transactional or transformational leadership? Other potential areas that have yet to be explored include examining potential moderators such as the distribution of cultural values and the team life cycle (Pearce & Conger 2003). Carson *et al* (2007) proposed that greater attention be paid to levels of task competence in the team, complexity of tasks and task interdependence in terms of examining how teams function when using shared leadership.

### **E-Leadership**

Zigurs (2003) suggested that traditional leadership models built on a foundation of face-to-face interactions may not fully explain how virtual leadership and teams work. How one provides feedback, encouragement, rewards and motivation needs to be re-examined where leadership is mediated through technology. The continuing developments in technology will no doubt have a significant impact on how virtual teams communicate and how leadership is manifested in such teams. Zaccaro and Bader (2003) provided an overview of the similarities and differences between face-to-face teams and e-teams. They focused on the impact of leadership functions such as communication building, role clarification, team development and effective task execution and how they differed when mediated through technology. Further studies have continued (Kahia & Avolio 2008; Xiao 2008) to examine virtual leadership and teamwork. The fundamental issue to address moving forward is how technology is transforming the traditional roles of leadership at both individual and collective levels.

The broad development of leadership theory presents a theoretical depth and underpinning genealogy for the leadership model that I considered was the most appropriate for my practice - transformational & transactional leadership. This is the model that I reflected my primary findings against and where I began to develop theory based on my data collection, analysis and presented as an autoethnographical narrative. Transformational & transactional leadership are critically discussed in the following section and includes conflicting opinions and diverging perspectives from several critics of the model.

## **Transformational & Transactional Leadership**

Interest in transformational leadership over the past three decades is the result of significant global economic changes from the early 1970s where many large western companies had to consider radical changes in their ways of doing business (Simic 1998). Factors such as rapid technological change, heightened levels of competition, a rising flow of products from newly industrialised countries and changing demographic structures created a turbulent, unstable and competitive environment in which significant organisational change was imperative. These amendments took their toll on worker satisfaction and empowerment and broke 'the old social contract of long-term employment in return for employee loyalty' (Griffin 2003 p.1). Because companies needed to resolve the apparently contradictory challenge of finding new ways of affecting change while simultaneously building employee morale, new approaches to leadership were needed (Conger 1999).

In his ground breaking book, 'Leadership', Burns (1978) sets out his ideas for the concept of transforming leadership based on research on political leaders. Burns' position is that leaders are neither born nor made. Instead, leaders evolve from a structure of motivation, values and goals. Burns (1978) delineates two types of leadership: transactional and transforming. Transactional leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with another for the purpose of an exchange of valued things, such as pay and status for work effort. Both parties acknowledge the power relationships of the other and together they continue to pursue their respective purposes. The people are not bound together by a mutually similar purpose. Transactional leadership involves values, but they are values relevant to the exchange process such as honesty, fairness, responsibility and reciprocity. In contrast, transforming leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with one another and they increase their levels of motivation and morality. The power base mutually supports a common purpose. This latter form of leadership seeks to 'raise the level of human conflict and ethical aspiration of both the leader and led and thus it has a transforming effect on both' (Burns 1978 p.20). The result is a change in the level of commitment and an increased capacity for achieving mutual purposes. The transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher

needs and engages the full person. The result of the leadership is a mutual relationship that converts followers to leaders and leaders into moral agents. Transforming leadership may be exhibited by anyone in the organisation and it may involve influencing peers, superiors and subordinates (Yukl 1998). Burns saw the power of transforming leadership as more noble and different from charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo 1988).

Bass developed the work of Burns in 'Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations' (1985). Here, the leader transforms followers, the direction of influence being one-way, unlike Burns' who sees it as potentially a two-way process. Bass deals with the transformational style that incorporates social change, a facet missing from Burns' work. Bass concentrated his research on military, business and educational organisations. Most of his research stems from the inadequacies and deficiencies that were documented from Burns' earlier work. Previous research relied heavily on the use of survey instruments and many studies tested the same hypotheses (Stewart 2006), resulting in a paucity of theory and a lack of practical application of these limited findings (Bass 1998). Bass also was concerned that Burns (1978) set transactional and transforming leaders as polar opposites. He suggested instead that they are separate concepts and that good leaders demonstrate characteristics of both (Judge & Piccolo 2004).

Bennis and Nanus (1985) studied ninety top leaders and identified transformational (leaders) as being different from transactional (managers). The transformation is to make followers into self-empowered leaders and change agents. The leaders' job is to articulate visions and values clearly. The traits of the transformational leader are: idealised influence (leader becomes a role model); inspirational motivation (team spirit, provide meaning); intellectual stimulation (creativity and innovation); and individual consideration (mentoring). Other authors followed this approach. Kouzes and Posner (1988) view is based on trust. If a leader is perceived by subordinates to be reliable, the subordinates will participate to gain the common vision. Specifics of their model consist of challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way and encouraging the heart. Tichy and DeVanna's (1990) definition of transformational leadership is concerned with change, innovation and entrepreneurship, where transformational leadership is processed through recognising



the need for revitalisation, creating a new vision and institutionalising change. For Schien (1985), transformation referred to a change in the organisational culture.

Bass (1998) used an empirically based factor analytic framework, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), based upon 141 statements that were classified as either transformational or transactional (see below). The following four components of transformational leadership were developed from this research:

**Idealised Influence** – ‘Transformational leaders behave in ways that allow them to serve as role models for their followers. The leaders are admired, respected and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are endowed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence and determination. There are two aspects to idealised influence: the leader’s behaviours and the elements that are attributed to the leader by followers and other associates. These represent the interactional nature of idealised influence. Leaders who have a great deal of idealised influence are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than arbitrary. They can be counted on to do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct’ (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.6).

**Inspirational Motivation** – ‘Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers work. Team spirit is aroused. Enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. Leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states; they create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and demonstrate commitment to goals and the shared vision’ (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.6).

**Intellectual Stimulation** – ‘Transformational leaders stimulate their followers’ efforts to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems and approaching old situations in new ways. Creativity is encouraged. There is no public criticism of individual members’ mistakes. New ideas and creative problem solutions are solicited from followers who are included in the process of addressing problems and finding solutions. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches and their ideas are not criticised because they differ from the leaders’ ideas’ (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.7).

**Individualised Consideration** – ‘Transformational leaders pay attention to each individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor. Followers and colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential. Individualised consideration is practiced when new learning opportunities are created along with a supportive climate. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognised. The leader’s behaviour demonstrates acceptance of individual differences. A two way exchange in communication is encouraged and ‘management by walking around’ workplaces is encouraged. The individually considerate leader listens effectively. The leader delegates tasks as a means of developing followers’ (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.7).

The four dimensions of transformational leadership are interdependent; they must co-exist; and they are held to have an additive effect that yields performance beyond expectations (Gellis 2001; Kelly 2003). Bass’ theory of transformational leadership motivates followers by making them more aware of the importance of task outcomes,

inducing them to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of the organisation or team and activating their higher-order needs. Followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect toward the leader and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do. Transformational leaders empower followers and pay attention to their individual needs and personal development, helping followers to develop their own leadership potential.

The following summarise the characteristics that accompany the four foundational attributes of a transformational leader (Bass 1990a; Cox 2001; Stone, Russell & Patterson 2003; Tichy & Devanna 1986): clear sense of purpose, expressed simply (e.g. metaphors, anecdotes); value driven (e.g. have core values and congruent behaviour); strong role model; high expectations; persistent; self-knowing; love work; life-long learners; identify themselves as change agents; enthusiastic; able to attract and inspire others; strategic; effective communicator; emotionally mature; courageous; risk-taking; visionary; unwilling to believe in failure; sense of public need; considerate of the personal needs of employees; listens to all viewpoints; mentoring, and able to deal with complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity.

Transformational leaders are people who can create significant change in both followers and the organisation with which they are associated (Griffin 2003). They lead changes in mission, strategy, structure and culture, in part through a focus on intangible qualities like vision, shared values and ideas and relationship building. They are able to give significance to diverse activities, illustrating, for example, the ways in which different people and groups might be working towards larger organisational objectives. Transformational leaders also find common ground that allows them to enlist followers in processes of change. Transformational leaders combine a learning philosophy (Kolb 1996; Argyris & Schon 1996; Fisher & Torbert 1995) through the principles of the concept of a leader as a designer and teacher. 'The first task of organisation design concerns designing the governing ideas of purpose, vision and core values by which people will live. Few acts of leadership have a more enduring impact on an organisation than building a foundation of purpose and core values' (Senge 1996 p.293).

Bass's (1985) theory includes transactional leadership as part of the model, viewed as an exchange of rewards for compliance and containing three components - contingent reward, management by exception and laissez-faire leadership. The following components of transactional leadership were developed by Bass:

**Contingent Reward** – 'Transactional leaders assign or obtain follower agreement on what needs to be done with promised or actual rewards offered in exchange for satisfactorily carrying out the assignment. Contingent reward is transactional when the reward is a material one, such as a bonus, or it can be transformational when the reward is psychological, such as praise' (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.8).

**Management by Exception** – 'This corrective transaction may be active or passive. In active, the leader arranges to actively monitor deviances from standards, mistakes and errors in the followers assignments and to take corrective action. In passive, the leader waits passively for deviances, mistakes and errors to occur and then takes corrective action' (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.8).

**Laissez-faire Leadership** – 'Laissez-faire leadership is the avoidance or absence of leadership. Necessary transactions are not made. Actions are delayed. Responsibilities of leadership are ignored. Authority remains unused' (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.8).

Transformational and transactional are distinct but not mutually exclusive processes and the same leader may use both types of leadership at different times in different situations. Although Bass believes that transformational and transactional leadership are at different ends of the leadership continuum (Leithwood & Jantzi 2000) he maintains that the two can be complementary. Bass refers to the 'Full Range of Leadership Model' (1998) where an optimal leader would practice the transformational components more frequently and the transactional components less frequently. The transactional components deal with the basic needs of the organisation and the transformational practices encourage commitment and foster change. Bass also concurs with Burns regarding leadership occurring at all levels and by any individual, together with the importance for leaders to develop leadership in those below them - 'this notion is at the heart of the paradigm of transformational leadership' (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.2).

The distinction between transactional and transformational leadership is very close to the distinction made between management and leadership. Transactional behaviours are considered to be management behaviours whereas transformational behaviours are viewed as leadership behaviours; transformational leaders extend beyond the simple transactional leadership process (Bass 1985). Some writers see a difference between

leadership and management. Whereas leaders are seen as charismatic and often are admired and held in high esteem, managers frequently are thought of as the organisation's taskmasters. Zaleznik (1998) and Kotter (1990) assert that although leadership and management may be similar in a few ways, they have many distinct differences. It is unusual for one person to have the skills to serve as both an inspiring leader and a professional manager. In large organisations, these two distinct roles are even more difficult to assimilate in one person, and the tendency is to set leadership skills aside in favour of managing the workplace. Rost (1998) contends that the two concepts are fundamentally different, without denigrating management to ennoble leadership. Kotter's (1990) analysis indicated that management is about predictability and order whilst leadership related to organisational change. It is questionable whether clear distinctions between leadership and management can be drawn because people cannot be categorised neatly into roles as leaders or managers. The real challenge for organisations is to combine strong leadership with strong management (Kotter 1990). The following framework (Figure 5) represented the differences between leading and managing:

<b>Leading</b>	<b>Managing</b>
Leading	Managing
Establishing direction	Planning & budgeting
Aligning people	Organising & staffing
Motivating & inspiring	Controlling & problem solving
Produces change	Produce short-term results
Influence relationship	Authority relationship
Leaders & followers	Managers & subordinates
Do the right thing	Do things right
Focus on people	Focus on systems & structure
Rely on trust	Rely on control
Emphasise values & goals	Emphasise tactics and systems
Have a long term view	Have a short term view
Ask what & why	Ask how & when
Challenge the status quo	Accept the status quo
Focus on the future	Focus on the present
Develop visions & strategies	Develop detailed timetables
Take risks	Avoid risks
Inspire	Motivate
Use people influence	Use position influence
Operate outside of rules	Operate within rules

Figure 5: Differences between Leading & Managing

Source: Kotter 1990; Hickman 1998

Yukl (1998) states that managers are oriented toward stability and leaders are oriented toward innovation; managers get people to do things more efficiently, whereas leaders get people to agree about what things should be done - leadership is the use of influence and management is the use of authority (Katz and Kahn cited in Rost 1998). Bennis and Nanus (1985) wrote that managing means to bring about, to accomplish and to conduct. Leading is influencing and guiding in direction, course, action and opinion. The distinction is crucial. 'Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing. The difference may be summarised as activities of vision and judgement – effectiveness versus activities of mastering routines – efficiency' (p.106). Bennis (1977) wrote 'leading does not mean managing; the difference between the two is critical. I know many institutions that are well managed and very poorly led'. Zaleznik (1977) proposed that managers are concerned about how things get done and leaders are concerned with what the things mean to people, distinguishing between management and leadership based on the personality differences of managers and leaders, suggesting that managers are 'once born' and leaders are 'twice born'. It is clear that the evidence is inconclusive concerning the relationship between leadership and management and it is likely that discussions will continue in the future (Storey 2004).

In 'Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness' (2003), Burns offers an expansion of his earlier book and suggests ways in which transactional leaders can learn to become transformational. He acknowledges that what was lacking in his original work was a focus on psychology. He believes that to understand leadership and change we must examine human needs and social change, an acknowledgment that brought him into line with Bass' approach. Burns also examined leadership as a form of power. He contends that leadership is a moral undertaking and a response to human wants as they are expressed in human values.

Transformational leaders influence followers by arousing strong emotions and identification with the leader and they may also transform followers by serving as a coach, teacher and mentor. Transformational leaders seek to empower and elevate followers (Yukl 1998). Transformational leadership is distinct from charismatic leadership (Congo & Kanungo 1998). Bass (1985) proposed that charisma is a

necessary component of transformational leadership, although a leader can be transformational without being charismatic (Yukl 1994).

Bass and Riggio (2006) examine the contribution of transformational leadership to commitment and its concomitants of involvement, loyalty and satisfaction. The strongest effects of transformational leadership seem to be on followers' attitudes and their commitment to the leader and the organisation. Individualised consideration at all levels also enhances commitment. Research has also shown that transformational leaders have more satisfied followers than non-transformational leaders (Dumdum, Lowe & Avolio 2002), achieved through being inspirational, showing commitment to a cause or the organisation and who show genuine concern for followers.

A key element of the relationship between transformational leaders and followers is trust, gained by the leader maintaining their integrity and dedication, by being fair in the treatment of followers and by demonstrating their faith in followers by empowering them (Bass & Riggio 2006). At the heart of transformational leadership is the development of followers, with much of this occurring through effective empowering of followers by leaders. Empowerment can be understood as a process of identification focused toward the development of a shared vision among organisational members (Munduate & Medina 2004). To truly empower, the leader must at times take a hands-off approach, which is also a characteristic of laissez-faire leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006). Here, the leader avoids providing direction and support, shows lack of caring for what the followers do and abdicates responsibilities both mentally and physically. In general, empowerment is ordinarily thought to be a good thing yet it can have dark sides where it can be seen as paternalistic, where leaders talk about empowering followers but they are actually unwilling to share the power. Empowerment of followers may mean that the followers become more responsible for failures. Leaders can also take back the gift as well. Empowerment differs from delegation in that the former is a motivational process among organisational members and is not temporally limited by the leader (Conger & Kanungo 1988)

Whether transformational or transactional leadership emerges in an organisation and is successful and effective depends upon the environment, the organisation, the tasks

and goals involved and the distribution of power between the leaders and the followers (Bass & Riggio 2006). Effective transformational leadership may be contingent on the basic organisational structure and whether it is more or less amenable to this style of leadership, together with the type of organisational members who may determine whether transformational leadership is a good fit for the organisation. There is an argument that transformational leadership is facilitative of change because it contributes to organisational improvement, effectiveness and institutional culture (Barnett, McCormick & Connors 2001). As such, it is appropriate in organisational environments of turbulence and change.

A number of theorists have reviewed the development of transformational leaders, particularly the personal background and early experiences of leaders. Popper and Maysless (2003) noted the role that parents play in developing transformational leaders, who, 'like good parents, develop self-efficacy and competence for being there for their protégés, by providing challenges, by conceiving high expectations and by monitoring and providing support without being overbearing' (2003 p.53). Other research (Avolio & Gibbons 1988; Avolio 1994) was based on biodata (life history data) that demonstrated that family, school and work are important determinants in influencing transformational leaders. There are also a number of personality characteristics that can be theoretically linked to transformational leadership in general and to its specific components. For example, one would expect that transformational leaders would be outgoing, extraverted and sociable, confident and have high self-esteem. They would be positive, optimistic and emotionally balanced, able to cope with stressful and complex environments and finally, innovators and more likely to be risk takers (Bass & Riggio 2006).

Burns (2003) and Bass and Riggio (2006) make the case for transformational leadership, for now and in the future, being 'the best-fitting model for effective leadership in today's world' (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.224). Their rationale for this position is that the nature of leadership has changed drastically in recent years. The world is more complex and fast paced requiring individuals, groups and organisations to continually change and adapt. Transformational leadership is, at its core, about issues around transformation and change. The role of the leader has also changed. Autocratic and authoritarian leaders are no longer the norm, although they still exist.

Leaders are expected to listen and be responsive, together with being a mentor, coach, offering support, empowering and caring. Followers have also changed. They are often knowledge workers, knowing more about the task than the leader. They are also diverse, as a group, and potentially as individuals. They are also the future leaders, so their leadership potential must be developed and realised. Adaptation is the key attribute – transformational leaders are adaptive leaders.

There are conflicting opinions and diverging perspectives from critics of transformational leadership that indicate the contested nature of the concept. Evers and Lakomski (1996) argue that it is difficult to discriminate between transactional and transformational leadership behaviours. Leithwood and Bass (2000) acknowledge the difficulty on providing evidence for transformational leadership - ‘we can really only tell the difference if we know the nature of the purposes and their effects which depend on how people interpret what they see’ (p.77). Evers and Lakomski (2000) add ‘if there is no principled way of telling one leader behaviour from another, then any claim to have empirically identified transformational leadership effects is not justified. Claims to leadership are nothing more than personal belief or opinion’ (p.79).

Possibly the most significant charge against transformational leadership is that the MLQ, which underpins the philosophical framework of transformational leadership, is conceptually flawed. Its detractors argue that the four elements which comprise transformational leadership theory i.e. idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration, are not sufficiently distinctive to facilitate a meaningful separation of transformational leadership’s theoretical arguments from those of other leadership theories (Northouse 2007). To address these criticisms, research was conducted (Hoyt & Blascovich 2003) that conclusively demonstrated how trust was viewed as being the key ingredient which led followers to produce more qualitative work bought about by reacting to the influence of the leader.

Although the success of transformational leadership has been demonstrated by studies in a diverse range of professional and cultural settings, including military, schools and corporations (Bryant 2003), Spreitzer, Perttula & Xin (2005) make it clear that while



transformational leadership is effective regardless of culture, the level of effectiveness depends to some extent on cultural values. People with traditional cultural values see weaker links between transformational leadership and leader effectiveness than those with less traditional values. As Carlson and Perrewé (1995) observe, major changes in the organisation's mission, strategies and level of follower commitment are likely to emerge as a result of transformational leadership.

Descriptive studies based on interviews and observation also find that transformational leadership is effective in a variety of different situations (e.g., Bennis & Nanus 1985; Tichy & Devanna 1986). However, most of the theories have conceptual weaknesses that reduce their capacity to explain effective leadership (Yukl 1999). These include the following criticisms. The underlying influence processes for transformational and transactional leadership are still vague, and they have not been studied in a systematic way; most theories of transformational leadership are conceptualised primarily at the dyadic level - the major interest is to explain a leader's direct influence over individual followers, not leader influence on group or organisational processes. The causal effects of leader behaviour on the organisational processes that ultimately determine effectiveness are seldom described in any detail. The identification of specific types of transformational behaviour seems to be based mostly on an inductive process and the theoretical rationale for differentiating among the behaviours is not clearly explained. Each transformational behaviour includes diverse components, which makes the definition more ambiguous. Regarding transactional leadership, Yukl (1999) states that although the theory is defined as a process of leader-subordinate exchange, it fails to make a strong link between this process and each of the transactional behaviours. Instead, transactional leadership includes a diverse collection of (mostly ineffective) leader behaviours that lack any clear common denominator.

Bass (1997) summarises other criticisms of transformational leadership. It lends itself to amoral self-promotion by leaders since it makes use of impression management. He suggests it is antithetical to organisation learning and development involving shared leadership, equality, consensus and participative decision-making. It encourages followers to go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the organisation and may emotionally engage followers in pursuit of evil ends. This point is supported by

Carlson and Perrewe (1995) who remind us that an organisation's culture socialises individuals into that culture. While acceptable behaviour might be supported in this way, so too might socially unacceptable behaviour. Finally, Bass (1997) notes that transformational leadership can see followers manipulated in ways that may see them lose more than they gain.

Gronn (1995) charges transformational leadership with being paternalistic, gender exclusive, exaggerated and having a social-class bias. Numerous shortcomings are outlined: a lack of empirically documented case examples; a narrow methodological base; no causal connection between leadership and desired organisational outcomes; and the unresolved question as to whether leadership is learnable. Evans and Lakomski (2000) add that from a naturalistic research perspective, there may be as many different accounts about leadership as there are organisational contexts.

The morality of transformational leadership has been questioned (Griffin 2003). A key criticism is that transformational leadership has potential for the abuse of power (Hall, Johnson, Wysocki & Kepner, 2002). As Stone, Russell and Patterson (2003) observe, transformational leaders can exert a very powerful influence over followers, who offer them trust and respect. Some leaders may have narcissistic tendencies, thriving on power and manipulation. Burns (1997) explains that leaders may be manipulative, withhold information, initiate projects which they personally oppose, publicly support but privately oppose proposals, be more concerned about their power and gaining more of it. Here Burns is describing pseudotransformational leaders, those who work closely with them know them to be deceptive, domineering and egotistical while their public image may be that of saviours. Yukl (1989) describes this as the 'dark side of charisma' (p. 227). These criticisms about the morality of transformational leadership have been addressed by the argument that to be truly transformational, leadership must have moral foundations (Griffin 2003). Thus, 'to bring about change, transformational leadership fosters the modal values of honesty, loyalty, and fairness, as well as the end values of justice, equality, and human rights' (Griffin 2003). The theory of transformational leadership has been criticised for being too positive a portrayal of leadership (Beyer 1999; Yukl 1999). Bass and Riggio (2006) recognise that transformational leadership does represent the positive end of the continuum of leadership and that the negative aspects largely occur when the

leadership is inauthentic and personalised rather than socialised. There may well be circumstances when transformational leadership is less effective than other forms of leadership and these need to be studied.

Arguably transformational leadership theory has offered a plausible synthesis of aspects of leadership theories, offering a coherent model which is capable of adapting to the complexity of modern organisational life. ‘A rapidly changing competitive climate requires participative, visionary and inspirational style of leadership’ (Huczynsky & Buchanan 2007). Transformational leadership theory by its very nature is open to criticisms because the ideas they purport can be challenged by any sceptical mind. It is self-evident that elusive concepts such as influence and charisma traverse many situations where the numbers of variables at play are too vast to measure with any degree of accuracy that would satisfy validity requirements. In terms of the future of transformational leadership, there appears to be an emerging orthodoxy in the literature favouring a blend of transactional and transformational leadership (Bryant 2003; Gellis 2001; Hoyt & Blascovich 2003). Transformational leadership as we know it will likely continue to evolve in the future and that it is likely to be accompanied by continued uncertainty and ambiguity.

<b>Leadership Theory</b>	<b>Theory Relevant to Primary Inquiry Findings</b>
Classical Leadership Theory	x
The Scientific Management & Human Relations Movements	x
Great Man Theory	x
Trait Leadership Theories	x
Style (Behavioural) & Traditional Leadership Models	x
Contingency (Situational) Leadership Theories	x
New Leadership Theories	x
Charismatic Leadership	x
Servant Leadership	x
Authentic Leadership	x
Complexity Leadership	x
Shared or Collective Leadership	x
E-Leadership	x
<b>Transformational &amp; Transactional Leadership</b>	✓

Figure 6: Theoretical Context for Transformational/Transactional Leadership

Source: The Author

In summary, this review depicts the scope of leadership knowledge that spans over 2000 years of writing and reviews the theoretical developments in leadership literature beginning with early classical models (Grint 1997) and moving towards the present day. It is fair to say that each generation has added something to the overall debate on leadership and that the debate continues' (van Maurik 2001). The review sets a context for transformational and transactional leadership theories (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006), those that my primary research findings will be reflected against (Figure 6).

### **Leadership and Organisational Culture**

Leadership and culture are conceptually intertwined (Schein 1997) with the essence of culture being its core of basic assumptions and established beliefs. Building an organisational culture and shaping its evolution is the unique and essential function of

leadership. Organisational culture is regarded as a set of assumptions, beliefs, values, customs, structures, norms, rules, traditions and artefacts (Schein 2004). More colloquially, culture is 'how things are done around here' (Martin 2002 p.3) and it shapes the behaviour of its members in overt and covert ways, including when change takes place. It has also been called a system of shared meaning (Pizer & Hartel 2005) but how widely it is really shared is debatable (Martin 2002). Sub-cultures exist in organisations (Morgan & Ogbonna, 2008) which are often based on categories such as hierarchy, department, professional identity, ethnicity and gender, but may also be conceptualised as differing value systems.

Organisations are in essence socially constructed realities that are as much in the minds of their members as they are in concrete structures, rules and relations (Morgan 1997). Schein (2004) was particularly interested in the relationship of culture to leadership and saw that the 'dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make one realise that leadership and culture are the two sides of the same coin' (p.1). Organisational culture and leadership interact with each other (Bass & Riggio 2006). An examination of the links between leadership style and corporate culture often provides an explanation on why organisations work

the way they do (Morgan 1997). Leaders create and reinforce norms and behaviours within the culture.

Adaptive cultures (Kotter & Heskett 1992) parallel transformational cultures (Avolio & Bass 1991) where there is a sense of purpose and a feeling of family and leaders serve as role models, mentors and coaches. Cultures can also be transactional and consequently more unadaptive. Bass and Avolio (cited in Bass & Riggio 2006) identified nine different combinations of cultures that can be transformational, transactional or a combination of both or neither. Leaders will in many cases be concerned with changing existing cultures and these situations will pose various challenges. In situations like this, it is the true test of a leader as to whether their beliefs and values can be used to change current cultural and behavioural attitudes. 'Culture change is about leadership. Leadership is about culture change' (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998 p.165). It is also about defining and acting out the new behaviours, defined as open and trusting relationships, a commitment to people, participation in problem solving through teamwork, a commitment to change and innovation, a commitment to individual autonomy and finally, an obsessive commitment to loyal customers. These form the core values of an adaptive culture. Changing the culture may not be an easy task – 'organisations don't have cultures, they are cultures, and that is why they are so difficult to change' (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998 p.150).

### **Leadership, Influence and Power**

Terms such as influence, power and authority have been used in a variety of ways within the literature. Power has been defined as the capacity to influence others (Yukl 2006) and Pfeffer (1992) defines power as 'the potential ability to influence behaviour, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do' (p.30). Influence is central to the role of the leader - 'the essence of leadership is influence over followers' (Yukl 1998 p.175). A person may have power but for that to become leadership requires influence. Leadership is the exercise of power and the quality of leadership depends on an individual's ability to exercise power (Kets de Vries 1993). Morgan (1997) noted that power can be something someone possesses or it can be a social relation in some kind of dependency. Morriss (2002) claims that power is a capacity that when exercised can stimulate something to happen. Power may emanate from an individuals' ability

to control resources and from the sanctions one can impose on others. Power can also result from an individual's knowledge and experience, strength of personality and their state of mind regarding their role, how powerful they feel and how they therefore present themselves to others (Obholzer 1994). Power is invisible but a very real and potent force in organisations. Power exists within the relationship between social actors rather than residing with the actors themselves (Hatch 1997).

There are a number of bases of power within a social context – coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, referent (French & Raven 1959). A sixth base of power, information, was added later. There is also negative power (Yukl 1998). Power is not a static condition. It changes over time due to changing conditions and the actions of individuals and coalitions. Power can be acquired, maintained or lost through social exchange, where reciprocal influence processes occur over time between leaders and followers in small groups, or strategic contingencies, which explain the distribution of power over strategic decisions among subunits of an organisation (Yukl 1998). Other forms of power include personal power, derived from the characteristics of the person who occupies a leadership position and political power that includes control over decision processes, coalitions and institutionalisation. Organisational politics involve intentional acts of influence to enhance or protect the self-interest of individual or groups (Allen *et al* 1979). Research on the use of different forms of power by leaders suggests that effective leaders rely more on personal power than on position power (Munduate & Medina 2004). Position power is still important and interacts in complex ways with personal power to determine a leader's influence on subordinates (Yukl 1998). Effective leaders exert both position power and personal power in a subtle, easy fashion that minimises status differentials and avoids threatening the self-esteem of others. Power is often seen as an emotive concept because it can have negative connotations, largely derived from when power is seen as mis-used (Obholzer 1994).

Power cannot be separated from authority, which refers to 'the right to make an ultimate decision which is binding on others' (Obholzer 1994 p.39). Authority derives from an individual's position in the hierarchy, a source of legitimate power. Hatch (1997) refers to authoritative power as 'those circumstances under which individual's voluntarily accept the advice and direction of others' (p.284).

It is suggested that the power that rests in organisational structures as functional authority is an unquestionable legitimate power, while power exerted outside the lines of command in a bureaucratically structured organisation is illegitimate (Mintzberg 1985). Hardy and Clegg (1996) presented a definition of power that is the basis of a broad stream of literature: 'the ability to get others to do what you want them to do, if necessary against their will, or to get them to do something they otherwise would not do' (p. 623).

A common consensus of the definition of organisational politics does not exist (Buchanan & Badham 2008). Nevertheless Pettigrew (1977) introduced a definition that is broadly cited: 'politics concerns the creation of legitimacy for certain ideas, values and demands – not just actions performed as a result of previously acquired legitimacy. The management of meaning refers to a process of symbol construction and value use designed both to create legitimacy for one's own demands and to 'delegitimise' the demands of opponents' (p. 85). Politics is power in action, where individuals use tactics and other techniques of influence to foster their will or objectives upon others (Hardy 1996). Whether for personal or organisational goals, politics is about creating a perception of legitimacy through the management of meaning, and it has to do with shaping a perception of reality and imposing this perception of reality on others (Hardy 1996). From this one may conclude that sensegiving is at the core of political struggles and the fight for power. Sensegiving and organisational politics are interrelated. Both concepts are about controlling and shaping others' meaning construction and perceptions of reality (Weick et al. 2005).

Politics is the practical domain of power (Buchanan & Badham 2008) and politics is about creating legitimacy for certain ideas to influence meaning construction. Organisational change is a power struggle (Mintzberg 1985) where individuals and groups seek legitimacy to gain power (Brown 1998) either as a reinforced power or as redistributed power. Organisational politics are especially apparent during change when ambivalence and uncertainty are at their peak (Buchanan 2008). During change there is fertile ground for alternative perceptions of reality, but only one 'reality' will end up as the dominant and surviving 'reality'. Therefore, the political struggle will be about the power of meaning. The power of meaning has to do with shaping others

perceptions, cognitions and preferences (Hardy 1996), which is about controlling what position will end up as the preferred solution.

How much power and influence a leader needs depends on the situation. More influence is needed to make major changes in strategy when there is strong resistance to change. Less influence is needed when people have shared objectives and are intrinsically motivated to do what is needed (Yukl 1998). Theorists have long argued that the effective use of social influence is critical to obtaining and maintaining power in organisations (Cialdini 1988; Gardner 1990; Pfeffer 1992). The fact that we live in a social world and organisations are interdependent social systems means that we can get things done only with the help of other people (Pfeffer 1993). However, the loose notion of a social 'influence process' is not without its problems since it is unclear how one is able to differentiate leadership from other social influence processes, such as power and authority, in group and organisational contexts (Bryman 1986). There are many positions within an organisation that do not have any formal authority yet the individuals concerned are able to exercise influence. Another perspective is that of the illusion of influence – the belief that one has influence over a behaviour or outcome even when one does not or, at a minimum, overestimating one's degree of influence and control in a particular setting or situation (Pfeffer & Cialdini 1998). Yukl (1990) developed a classification with nine proactive influence tactics – rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, consultation, ingratiation, personal appeals, exchange, coalition tactics, legitimating tactics and pressure. Effective leaders use a combination of influence tactics dependent on the given situation.

The significance of power in shaping the self is central to the work of Foucault (1980) who offers a contrast to the traditional sociological orientations associated with symbolic interactionism (Callero 2003). For Foucault, the self is the direct consequence of power and can only be apprehended in terms of historically specific systems of discourse. So-called regimes of power do not simply control a bounded, rational subject but rather they bring the self into existence by imposing disciplinary practices on the body. Through surveillance, measurement and assessment, people in positions such as officers, teachers and technocrats serve as vehicles of power in diverse institutional settings. In this way, practices that are normatively represented as human interventions serve as mechanisms of domination. Foucault considered that



power was a condition that existed within society as a whole. It fundamentally existed in the institutionalised practices and language, the discourse, that is used to create the rules which in turn creates and classifies the knowledge accepted by a particular society as reflected in its social practices (Linstead 1993). The boundaries around the 'things' that we 'see, understand and take for granted' are in fact artificial and socially created. By creating boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) and compartments our attention is channelled in certain directions and is automatically directed away from other things. We are effectively socialised into seeing and understanding the world in which we live through the discourses that we experience and this is a reflection of power as conceived by Foucault. He argues that power gains its force because it is dispersed, its workings made invisible by the social construction of perceived realities that seem natural and appropriate (Martin & Meyerson 1998).

Postmodern perspectives on power refer to situations of domination/submission, as well as wilful action (e.g. any creative activity), recognising a new dimension of power stretched between action that is produced as a result of pressure from those in positions of authority to action that is undertaken through one's own authority (Hatch 1997). Power becomes a transformative capacity – the capacity 'of agents to accomplish their will' (Giddens 1979 p.256). Kouzes and Posner (1995) wrote about the nature of a leader's authority: 'Your challenge is to give your power away. If you get power and then hold and covet it, you will eventually be corrupted by it. The intriguing paradox of power is that the more you give away to others, the more you get for yourself' (p.185). When leaders share power with others, they demonstrate profound trust in and respect for others abilities.

Conflict will always be present in organisations (Morgan 1997). Conflict is a state of mind and can occur at an individual or group level, invariably as a result of politics or interpersonal relations. In either case, one party is seen as furthering their own position at the expense of the other (Yukl 1998). Conflict is a particular kind of interaction, marked by efforts at hindering, compelling or injuring and by resistance or retaliation against those efforts (Katz & Khan 1978). Responses to conflict, such as avoidance behaviour, the development of cultural norms and emotional behaviour, represent much of the reality of conflict in everyday organisational life, highlighting the private, informal and irrational aspects of conflict within an organisation (Kolb &

Putnam 1992). Three perspectives of conflict have been outlined - traditional, where conflict is harmful within organisations that are fundamentally co-operative structures with teams of employees and managers striving towards the achievement of goals; pluralist, where individuals have different interests, they form cliques and the organisation consists of many separate but related interest groups each pursuing their own objectives; interactional, where conflict stimulation and resolution is encouraged. This perspective argues that a group that is too peaceful and cooperative can become apathetic and unresponsive to changing needs. An on-going minimum level of conflict is encouraged to keep the group viable, self-critical and creative (Buchanan & Huczynski 1997). In its positive behavioural manifestations, conflict can provide the benefits of innovation and teamwork can encourage future cooperative acts and contribute to a successful change environment. Conflict and cooperation are only opposed when conflict is defined as destructive. When its constructive aspects are in focus, conflict and cooperation are seen as complementary processes (Hatch 1997). Conflict is a major source of stress in all organisations. In dealing with stress and crisis situations, transformational leaders are more likely to delay premature choices and to call for follower input in considering proposals. To manage the conflict, the transformational leader envisions ways in which conflicting parties can gain from agreement and cooperation.

### **Leadership and Organisational Psychodynamics**

Leadership is practised within social structures and it is the psychology of individuals that translates potential into actuality (Whittington 1993). Leaders interact with individuals and groups, involving psychodynamic exchanges between players. Psychodynamic theory is the understanding of one's self and others and the transactional nature of the leader-follower situation (Stech 2008). The following section covers the main body of literature on psycho-dynamic theory in the context of leadership and change.

Psychodynamic theories are primarily concerned with the internal dynamics of the mind and have a significant influence on individual and group behaviour, providing insights into the essentially irrational character of organisational life (Hirschhorn & Barnett 1993). These perspectives include the importance of the internal world of the individual in understanding their feelings and behaviour; the importance of

unconscious mental processes in determining feelings and behaviour (in Freudian theory, the unconscious mind contains both memories of past events and at the deepest level of the unconscious, biologically based instincts); the importance of childhood and early experience in affecting the adult personality, behaviour and feelings; and the importance of dynamics i.e. interactions between different aspects of the self (in Freudian theory there are three aspects of the self - the ego that makes decisions and has contact with external reality, the id that demands satisfaction of biological instincts and the super-ego that imposes moral restraints on behaviour) (Jarvis 2001).

Theories of leadership and change management draw on a number of social science disciplines, including those of child and adult psychology (Burnes 2004). There is a body of evidence to show that a leader's acts, decisions and behaviours in the organisational context are determined by a set of highly complex factors (Gabriel 1999; Kets de Vries 1993; Berne 1966). The features of an individual are developed early in life and in the workplace we react to various situations in a way that is determined mainly during childhood and earlier experiences. The behaviours of leaders have been described as psychologically defensive reactions to unconscious fears and anxieties and unresolved early life experiences (Fineman 1993; Domagalski 1999). Our reactions to situations reflect our biographies and being as personal histories are activated in our responses in our working lives (Fineman 1993).

Leadership and change inevitably give rise to emotions (Fineman 1993) and feelings play a central role in the leadership process George (2000). 'As emotional arenas, organisations bond and divide their members. Workaday frustrations and passions – boredom, envy, fear, love, anger, guilt, infatuation, embarrassment, nostalgia, anxiety – are deeply woven into the way roles are enacted and learned, power is exercised, trust is held, commitment formed and decisions made' (Fineman 2000 p.1). Feelings have been shown to influence the judgements that people make. When people are in positive moods, for example, their perceptions and evaluations are likely to be more favourable, they are more prone to remember positive information they are more self-assured, they are more likely to take credit for success and avoid blame for failures (George 2000). Leaders and others are generally unaware of the underlying factors that motivate their behaviour and are not always in touch with the fact that their

behaviour has a destructive effect on the organisation (Obholzer 1994). People do not always know why they do what they do and in some cases repress understanding as painful feelings may be uncovered (Fineman 1993). Individuals and organisations develop defences against difficult emotions and anxieties raised during the course of intra and inter relationships. These can be damaging and can hinder change progress. Several types of social defences have been identified – denial, splitting, projection and introjection (Obholzer 1994; Hirschhorn 2000; French & Vince 1999), repression, regression, reaction-formation and isolation (Gabriel 1999). Hirschhorn adds two further modes of social defence: organisational rituals and covert coalitions (Gabriel 1999). Some of these defences are deployed at an individual level whilst others may be deployed in small or large groups. By using social defences, people retreat from role, task and boundaries, distorting the groups' capacity to accomplish its primary task (Obholzer 1994; French & Vince 1999).

Emotional intelligence refers to 'the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth' (Mayer & Salovey 1997 p.5). Emotional intelligence contributes to effective leadership in organisations by focusing on five essential elements of leader effectiveness: development of collective goals and objectives; instilling in others an appreciation of the importance of work activities; generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism, cooperation and trust; encouraging flexibility in decision making and change; and establishing and maintaining a meaningful identity for an organisation (George 2000). People differ in terms of the degree to which they are aware of the emotions that experience and the degree to which they can verbally and non-verbally express these emotions. Some people are reluctant or ambivalent about expressing emotions. People also differ in terms of their ability to accurately express emotions. Some people, referred to as alexithymics, cannot appraise their own emotions and are unable to communicate their feelings using language. Emotions are an inescapable factor of individual and group life and are influential in leadership actions, and are at the heart of human motivation. As Gabriel describes (1999), 'one only has to scratch the surface of organisational life to discover a thick layer of emotions and feelings, at times checked, at times feigned, at times timidly expressed and at other times bursting out uncontrollably' (Gabriel

p.211). Emotions characterise and inform organisational processes as every day organisational members experience a range of emotions in the roles enacted (Fineman 2000). The range of emotions expressed in organisations is wide, including pride, anger, satisfaction, frustration, bitterness, fun and anxiety. Leadership is intrinsically an emotional process in which leaders display emotions to evoke emotional reactions in followers (Dasborough & Ashkanasy 2002). This is particularly true for transformational leaders who use inspirational motivation to encourage followers (Bass & Riggio 2006). Kets de Vries (1993) has focused on the importance of emotions in the role of leadership and has suggested that it is not just the context within which good or bad leadership is expressed, but also the psychological histories of selected leaders that shape organisational dynamics (Kets de Vries 1993).

Feelings of anxiety are the fundamental roots of distorted relationships at work and are managed by a work group deploying a set of social defences, such as denial, splitting, projection and introjection (Hirschhorn 2000). Bion (1970; 1961) developed the “container – contained” model which was about the relationship between a person’s emotion and its containment. Containment in this context refers to the way in which emotion is experienced or avoided, managed or denied, kept in or passed on, in order to mitigate or amplify its effects. The container is the receiver or the holder of the emotion. The leader can become a container for the emotions of followers, caused by the empathy of the individually considerate leader (Kets de Vries 1994). Bion (1961) also identified ‘work group mentality’ whereby members focus on the primary task and ‘basic assumption mentality’ which is the unconscious tendency to avoid work on the primary task if it stirs emotion and causes psychological conflict within the group or among group members. In the former case, Bion (1961) claimed that group members face reality and deal with the task. In the basic assumption, the group acts as though it believes or assumes that a cohesive group mind exists and can be sustained without work. When the group’s tasks promote anxiety, the basic assumption experience enables members to limit their feelings of isolation and depersonalisation. Bion (1961) argued that there are three basic assumptions that groups typically make. They assume that the group has been brought together to either fight an enemy or flee from it, to be dependent on a powerful leader, or to oversee the marriage of a pair who will provide a powerful saviour. The central feature of basic

assumption behaviour is the rapidity and ease with which groups take up and display these assumptions.

The primary task refers to the task the organisation or system must perform if it is to survive. This will involve allocating resources and prioritising these among the organisations different activities. Issues may arise in this seemingly simple process as different groups within the organisation may have different definitions of the primary task or may disagree with how resources have been allocated. In many cases, multiple tasks will be a more realistic reflection of a systems aim. The idea of the primary task was extended by Lawrence (cited in Obholzer & Roberts 1994) by proposing that people within an organisation pursue different kinds of primary tasks. The normative primary task is the formal task, the existential primary task is the task that people believe they are carrying out, the meaning or interpretation they put on their roles and activities, and the phenomenal primary task is the task that can be inferred from people's behaviour and of which they may not be consciously aware. This approach can highlight discrepancies between what an organisation or group says it sets out to do and what actually happens.

Taking a role in an organisation transforms power into authority with the person in the appropriate role taking the authority to enable their actions to be recognised and given legitimacy by others in the organisation. Hirschhorn (2000) defines two ways to enact a role – by facing the real work it represents or to violate it by escaping the risks such work poses. When we violate it, we help create and sustain an anxiety chain that hurts co-workers, and when we take a role we limit the consequences of our own fear. A further perspective is that we must understand our task to take our role – when tasks are not clear, we lack a context for taking our roles.

Organisational theories have emphasised the significance of the boundary that separates the organisation from its environment, one division from another and people from the roles they play. Each system has a boundary, and the management of this boundary is key to the effective working of the system. Boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) are closely associated with power, which can be built up by monitoring and controlling boundary transactions. Most people in leadership positions within an organisation engage in this kind of boundary management in a way that contributes to

their power. It can also extend an individuals' role into other areas that are not part of their formal status (Morgan 1997). Boundaries need both to separate and to relate to what is inside and what is outside. Miller and Rice (cited in Obholzer & Roberts 1994) state that where an enterprise consists of multiple task systems, there is a boundary around the system as a whole as well as one around each of the subsidiary systems. Each of these boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) needs to be managed so that all parts function in a coordinated way in relation to the overall primary task. This is also the case for each individual in an organisation, where there is a need to manage the boundary between an individual's inner world – their wishes, needs and resources – and external reality, in order to take up their roles (Obholzer & Roberts 1994). Where there are problems associated with boundaries, these can be seen in several areas such as definition of the primary task, taking up a role and conflict between individuals and groups. Depending upon the specific circumstances, boundaries can act as defensive mechanisms. Hirschhorn (2000) argued that the maintenance of boundaries involves a great deal of psychological work and boundaries offer a defence against anxiety at a cost of generating an anxiety all of their own. Where boundaries are poorly designed and managed, they can cause considerable stress and anxiety. Leadership, together with management, share a boundary regulating function; leadership is directly related to the pursuit of the aims and of the primary task (Obholzer 1994).

There has been debate regarding the 'fit' of postmodernism and psychoanalytic research (Carr 1999) with psychoanalysis focusing single-mindedly on the unconscious, yet Gabriel (1999) concludes that many theorists whose essential outlook is not psychoanalytic make use of psychoanalytic ideas, concepts and theories, frequently adding valuable insights to them. Where postmodernists contend that it's 'all-in-the-text', then psychoanalysis has a role to play in helping to reveal how and why these texts are constructed and emerge in the first place. Postmodernism merges psychoanalytic ideas with language philosophy in efforts to deconstruct and show the fragmentation of the subject (Alvesson & Deetz 1997).

### **Leadership & Self**

As a final section, the concepts of the self and leadership have been integrated into a theory of self-leadership, defined as the process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform (Neck, Manz, Godwin 1999) and

includes strategies for self-management as well as for management of the natural motivational value of the tasks and the patterns in one's thinking. It is conceptualised as a comprehensive self-influence perspective that concerns leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating (Manz 1986). Self-leadership focuses jointly on behaviour and cognition, on what should be done and why, in addition to how it should be done. An integral component of self-leadership is the concept of 'thought self-leadership' (TSL) which suggests that employees can influence or lead themselves by utilising specific cognitive strategies including the self-management of beliefs and assumptions (the elimination or alteration of distorted individual beliefs that form the basis of dysfunctional thought processes), self-dialogue (what we covertly tell ourselves) and mental imagery (the creation and, in essence, symbolic experience of imagined results of our behaviour before we actually perform) (Godwin, Neck, Houghton 1999). Self-leadership is sometimes called self-management where the leader knows one's skills and deploys them effectively. They are unacquainted with the concept of failure, referring instead to any such situation as a mistake (Bennis 1998). Self-management is a set of behavioural and cognitive strategies a person uses to influence and improve his or her behaviour. Behavioural self-management strategies are useful when you need to give yourself a push to do something: setting realistic goals, monitoring behaviour, rewarding or criticising yourself dependent on the outcome of an action. Cognitive self-management strategies build self-confidence and optimism, for example, self-talk where optimistic and positive thoughts are emphasised or mental imagery, where imagining performing a task successfully can create a positive approach (Sims & Lorenzi 1992). Manz (1986) argued that a more comprehensive and higher level of self-influence exists than the concept of self-management. Self-leadership goes beyond reduction of discrepancies from standards in one's immediate behaviour - it addresses the utility of and the rationale for the standards themselves. The individual self-leader is viewed as the ultimate source of standards that govern his or her behaviour. Individuals are seen as capable not only of monitoring their own actions but also of determining which actions and consequent outcomes are most desirable. Manz and Sims (2001) suggest that people are self-leading (internally controlled). Therefore, leadership by others (external controls) should function to awaken people's internal leadership energy and motivation.



An associated concept to self is that of professional practice which involves the idea of a profession. Schon (1987) outlines the nature of a professional practice, where the professional has a 'claim to extraordinary knowledge' (p.32). This extends to a community of practitioners who share conventions of action that include distinctive media, languages and tools. Professional practitioners bring specialities, experiences and perspectives to their work together with professional knowledge. Professional practice is described by Schon (1987 p.3) as 'a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution'. He says that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, while in the swamp lay the problems of greatest human concern.

### **Integrating the Conceptual Framework**

Whilst the conceptual framework comprises of three distinct bodies of literature concerning self, change and leadership, there are many instances where the concepts connect with each other and in some cases overlap and share mutual theory. There is a feeling of a natural fit between the three concepts and a level of integration that is relevant to the analysis of the research data and connects to the themes and body of the PhD. The relationship between the three themes of self, change and leadership and my practice is presented in Figure 7.

The following examples illustrate the connections between the three concepts.

#### *Leadership Connected to Self*

- 'leadership is better understood as identity construction; leadership emerges in the interaction between people; leaders' images of themselves are social constructions and the development of a leadership self (and thereby leadership) is coupled to the interaction between leaders and followers' (Karp & Helgo 2009)
- 'Core to the self and identity approach to leadership effectiveness is an understanding of the way that we perceive ourselves. Our identity strongly informs our feelings, beliefs, attitudes, goals and behaviour' (Leary & Tangney 2003)



Figure 7: Conceptual Framework

Source: The Author

- Zaleznik (1992) considers the self as a defining difference between leaders and managers. Self-leadership is the process of influencing oneself to establish the self-direction and self-motivation needed to perform (Neck, Manz, Godwin 1999)

*Leadership Connected to Change*

- Yukl declares that ‘leading change is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities’ (1998 p.438) and argues that change is the essence of leadership
- Transformational leadership is, at its core, about transformation and change. (Bass & Riggio 2006)

- Tichy and DeVanna's (1990) definition of transformational leadership is concerned with change where transformational leadership is processed through recognising the need for revitalisation, creating a new vision and institutionalising change.
- Transformational leaders are people who can create significant change in both followers and the organisation with which they are associated (Griffin 2003).
- According to Kotter (1999), the difference between leaders and managers is in the orientation to change. Management is concerned with the present and does not concern itself with purpose and organisational identity
- Leaders 'change the way people think about what is desirable, possible and necessary' (Zaleznik 1977 p.71)
- Leadership cannot be separated from change and all change requires and heightens the need for leadership (Adair 1990)
- Kotter (1996) states that those who attempt to create major change with simple, linear, analytic processes almost always fail. The reason for this is that we are taught to manage and not to lead
- Kotter (1996) distinguishes between 'managing change' and 'leading change' – 'managing change is important. Without competent management, the transformation process can get out of control. But for most organisations, the much bigger challenge is leading change. Only leadership can blast through the many sources of corporate inertia. Only leadership can motivate the actions needed to alter behaviour in any significant way. Only leadership can get change to stick by anchoring it in the very culture of an organisation' (p.30)
- Research on charismatic, cultural and transformational leadership indicates that a clear and compelling vision is beneficial in guiding change in an organisation (Yukl 1998).

### *Self Connected to Change*

- George and Jones (2001) proposed a model that focused on change at the individual level, recognising that change is initiated and carried out by individuals in organisations, where organisations only change and act through their members
- At the heart of change is a change in member's beliefs, interpretive schemes and behaviours (Porras & Robertson 1992).

- Eriksen (2008) states that changing oneself by managing change process as a leader, one has to become the change process in order to be successful.
- Meaningful organisational transformation does not occur without a corresponding self-transformation, most importantly the individual leading the change. To effectively facilitate organisational change, 'I found that I had to see myself, accept myself and to be(come) the change I wanted to see' (Quinn et al 2000 p.42).

### **Summary**

This chapter presented a critical review of the theories of self, change and leadership derived from extant literatures that formed the conceptual framework for my inquiry. This knowledge is a foundation upon which I address the purpose of my research and from where I can construct an analysis of the primary data collected during my study. The transformational and transactional leadership models are the specific leadership theories that I shall focus upon. I anticipate there will be aspects of current theory where my analysis will confirm or modify existing understanding and also produce new observations concerning relevant literatures.

# Research Methodology & Methods

### Introduction

As the study was about me, I wanted to write in the first person, reflecting myself as both subject and researcher (Ellis 2004). I searched for a format that would allow me to express aspects of my research in a style that I believed would complement how I understood my identity to be. As I learnt more about research methods, autobiography became highly relevant as a narrative methodology to explore my identity and practice. As well as a value to myself as author, I saw my work offering a way to improve the lives of participants and readers (Ellis 2004) that could include my colleagues and a wider audience. My work illustrates a model for use by researchers in terms of the methodology and methods I used and by practitioners in similar circumstances to myself who are looking into their leadership practice and the field more generally. This would answer the question ‘how useful is the story?’ and ‘to what uses might the story be put?’ (Bochner 2002). The circle of knowledge would be completed where I drew upon others as part of my inquiry and then returned my work to others as a potentially useful study.

In this chapter, I describe the research methodology and methods based on Cresswell’s (2009) model of research design that includes a philosophical worldview, a strategy of inquiry and a research method. The operational aspects of the data collection and analysis activities that took place are also described. .

### The Philosophical Worldview - Postmodernism

I was attracted by a postmodern philosophy that encouraged me to think about alternatives to traditional, positivist research methods, those that can connect to people, their lives and their concerns. I was looking to find ways of working that complemented my values, views of reality and beliefs about how knowledge is known and created. My ontological view of reality or the nature of being and my epistemological understanding of what it means to know are intertwined. Ontologically I assumed ‘personal reality’ and epistemologically the notion of ‘lived experience’, subjectivity and meaning within relative context (Denzin & Lincoln

2003). At the heart of postmodernist thought is an extreme or complete scepticism of, or disbelief in, the authenticity of human knowledge and practice (Schon 1987). It is not possible to access 'the truth', (Richardson 1994), privileged grand progressive narratives are rejected, there is an emphasis on the contextual, an acceptance of uncertainty, contingency, variety and pragmatism, a recognition that power and knowledge are inextricably interlinked in discursive contexts and an exploration of contradiction and paradox (Fawcett 1998). Accordingly, all claims of expertise are invalidated or at least are considered no more viable than any other 'stories, narratives, fictions, myths or accounts' (Prus 1996 p.217).

Postmodernism has been described as a 'sensitivity' (Richardson 1991 p.222), a way of looking at and operating in the world that is alive and open and not boring. Postmodernism questions the progression towards certainty and clear unambiguous reasoning. It welcomes diversity, variety, multiple interpretations of phenomena and multiple strategies. Rather than seeking a centralised, uniform understanding of events, localised, individual explanations are explored. Generalisation, while not rejected, is not seen as important as the understanding and exploration of the individual. There may be many views held which are diverse and even contradictory. There is no one method of tackling a particular problem, rather there may be many approaches which are equally valid - provided they work. Postmodernism emphasises subjectivity (Alvesson & Deetz 1997). Emphasis is placed on change, flexibility and transformation. Since individuals perceive the truth about the world differently, it becomes important in a postmodernist view to listen and understand individual perceptions. The importance of the text is central to postmodernism. Whether that text is interview notes, data structures, standards manuals or invoices, postmodernism seeks to 'deconstruct' texts, to expose inherent contradictions, inconsistencies, hidden agendas, paradoxes and fuzziness.

Postmodernism is set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world, characterised by a sense of fragmentation, an erosion of the idea of a firm sense of self and a falling away of traditional values. What is generally characterised as the postmodern condition is largely a by-product of the century's technologies of social saturation (Gergen 2000). The firm sense of self, close relationships and community were being replaced by the multiplicitous, the contingent, and the partial. Emerging technologies

saturate us with the voices of human kind, furnishing us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self - 'the very idea of individual selves is now threatened with eradication' (Gergen 2000 viii). In our liquid modern times the 'world around us is sliced into poorly coordinated fragments while our individual lives are cut into a succession of ill-connected episodes' (Bauman 2004 p.12). The modern era might be defined as lacking in communal bonds, extended family ties and clearly defined social groups, abandoning us to the individualised pursuit of meaning. Some postmodernists welcome this movement, where the self is allowed to cast off the traditional restraints of social structure and acknowledge the relational, dialogic constitution of self, encourage multi-voiced selves and engender a more dynamic, playful and situated sense of identity more generally (Gergen 2000; Rowan & Cooper cited in Adams 2007). There are criticisms of postmodernism, including its totalistic scepticism, its inattentiveness to obdurate reality, the human struggle for existence and human interaction and its processual features and its lack of conceptual discipline and epistemological integrity. It does not have much to offer those already working in the interpretivist tradition (Prus 1996).

### **The Strategy of Inquiry – The Constructivist Paradigm**

In my research I set out to seek value from others and recognised that myself is socially constructed and can be expressed through narrative (Casey 1995). The methodology and methods I used in my inquiry needed to be suited to the purpose of creating and giving meaning to those social constructions. Therefore my research methodology was qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). This addressed the purpose of my study and complemented my identity and how I preferred to work. Qualitative research allowed me to study myself in my natural setting and to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings I can bring to them. It is the world of lived experience, where individual belief and action intersect with culture (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). I had a natural empathy with qualitative research, which 'involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world; deploying a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand' (Denzin & Lincoln 2003 p.4). Qualitative research is participative, socially constructed and reflexive. The interpretive bricoleur produces 'a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings and interpretations of the world or the phenomenon under

analysis' (Denzin & Lincoln 1994 pp.2-3). Here, research is an interactive process, shaped by personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity and by the people in the setting. Qualitative research is entirely appropriate to a postmodern philosophy. Postmodernists have contributed to the understanding that there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual, who is 'seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions; all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why' (Denzin & Lincoln 2003 p.31).

My approach centres on the postmodern constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), which is based on a relativist ontology (multiple constructed realities), interpretive epistemologies (the knower and known interact and shape one another) and interpretive, naturalistic methods (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Users of this paradigm are oriented to the production of constructed understandings of the social world (Lincoln & Guba 2003). Constructivists are deeply committed to the view that what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. In place of a realist view of theories and knowledge, constructivists emphasise the instrumental and practical function of theory construction and knowing (Schwandt 1994). Guba and Lincoln (1994) acknowledge that constructivist, interpretive, naturalistic and hermeneutic are all similar notions. Their constructivist philosophy is idealist; they assume that what is real is a construction in the minds of individuals (Lincoln & Guba 1985). It is also pluralist and relativist. There are multiple, often conflicting, constructions and all are meaningful. Constructions are in the minds of individuals – 'they do not exist outside of the persons who create and holds them; they are not part of some 'objective' world that exist apart from their constructors' (Guba & Lincoln 1989 p.143). The act of inquiry begins with issues/concerns of participants and unfolds through a dialectic of iteration, analysis, critique that leads to a construction of outcomes. Researchers following the constructivist paradigm do so from the position of attempting to understand the world from the position of those who live in it, and this will mean interpreting it (Schwandt 1994). Social constructionism invites us to see the world and ourselves as socially constructed; we deconstruct fixed beliefs and invite other ways of thinking (Etherington 2004).

The constructivist paradigm is appropriate to both symbolic interactions and post-modern inquires. Hatch (1997) views the subjectivist epistemology of the



constructivist paradigm as complementing the symbolic-interpretive perspective, where for the subjectivist, all knowledge of the world is filtered through the knower and is powerfully altered by cognitive, social and cultural forces. There is no claim made about whether or not reality exists independent of the observer; it is assumed that this cannot be known since all knowledge is mediated by experience. Those who take a subjectivist stance believe that knowledge is relative to the knower and can only be created and understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved. Reality is “*in here*” (Hatch 1997 p.48) - it is defined by the individual’s subjective experience. This position is extended by postmodernists who see individual subjectivities as themselves constructed within their social and cultural context i.e. the concept of individual or self is itself considered a construction of social and cultural forces that takes place in the domain of language use (Hatch 1997).

Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretation into motion and connect the researcher to specific methods of collecting and analysing materials. Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, including ethnography, hermeneutics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, interviews and participant observation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), all associated with the goal of trying to understand the complexities of the social world in which we live and how we go about thinking, acting and making meaning in our lives. Rich descriptions are produced, in anticipation of meaningful analysis and theory development and presented through narrative forms of representation and interpretation,

### **The Research Method – Autobiography**

The postmodern phase of qualitative research was defined in part by the narratives of the self, a concern for storytelling, for composing ethnographies in new ways (Richardson 2003; Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Narratives have long been of interest in accessing an individual’s subjectivity, experience and reflections of the past (Byrne 2003). Postmodernism has encouraged a return to valuing local stories and lived experience (Etherington 2004). By positioning ourselves within the text, by deconstructing dominant discourses and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world (Derrida 1981), by refusing to privilege one story over another and by allowing new stories to emerge, we have come to a ‘narrative turn’ in the world. Through the researchers’ reflexivity, we co-create multifaceted and many-layered stories that

honour the messiness and complexity of human life (Geertz 1973; Speedy 2001) and enable us to create meaning out of experience (Bruner 1990). Narratives of the self are not fundamentally possessions of the individual. They are the product of social interchange. Individuals make sense of life events by constructing self-narratives that are ‘properties of social accounts or discourses’ (Gergen & Gergen 1988 p.19), symbolic systems used for social purposes. Narratives are, in effect, ‘social constructions, undergoing continuous alteration as interaction progresses’ (Rose 1998 p.176). Narrative accounts are embedded within social action and interchange, in turn rendered socially visible through narratives (Gergen & Gergen 1988). The self is influenced by interactions with others and the narratives others tell us about ourselves influence our view of self (Higgins 1989). There are liabilities associated with the construction of a personal self so highly dependent on social interaction, including the potential for constructing a false self that does not mirror one’s authentic experiences (Harter 1983). One may incorporate opinions of others toward the self that do not correspond to events as experienced. Alternatively, the demands of significant others, coupled with the need to garner their approval, may lead to the suppression of authentic opinions or behaviour and the display of what others need to observe or want to hear.

Narrative inquiry helps to understand how our socialisation and life choices have impacted on the creation of our identities, helping us to move away from the view of identity as ‘fixed’ and towards the view of identity as something that is constantly being reconstructed and constituted through interpersonal processes and through the stories we tell (Etherington 2004). ‘Our identities are defined and expressed through the ways we position ourselves vis-à-vis others along the several dimensions that constitute our networks of relationships’ (Mishler 1999 p.16). The narrative interpretation of experience points to the symbolic nature of human action: if human action can be narrated, it is because it is inherently symbolic in nature (McNay 2000). All action and experience requires interpretation and it is the act of interpretation that narrative acquires its centrality. Narrative is central to any understanding of human action and behaviour, including identity (McKernan & MacLulich 2004). The narrative structure of self-identity is ‘neither authentic nor ideological but an unstable mixture of fact and fabulation’ (McNay 2000 p.94). Self-narratives are ways individuals construct private and personal stories linking diverse events of their lives

into unified and understandable wholes (Polkinghorne 1991; 1995). They are the basis of personal identity and self-understanding and provide answers to the question ‘who am I?’ or ‘who I think I am’ (Shaw 1997). We play roles and wear masks that are the representations of the way we see ourselves (Goffman 1959). Narrative allows the teller to bring coherence to experiences, memories and thoughts. Whether the narrative concerns self or other, it is a reflection of our perceptions of our experiences (Shaw 1997).

In personal narratives (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), the researcher takes on the dual identities of academic and personal selves to tell autobiographical stories about some aspect of their experience in daily life. Their primary purpose is to understand a self or some aspect of a life lived in a cultural context. Authors become “I”, readers become “you”, and subjects become “us”. The goal is to write meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and may make a difference. These stories play an integral role in the persons we are and the persons we present to others. It is often difficult to talk about self without appearing to be self-centred. Amidst the fluidity, fragmentation and disorganisation of previously binding social structures, the personal biography becomes the blueprint for making sense of one’s life-course and combines forcefully with the process of reflexivity (Adams 2007).

‘Autobiography is indeed everywhere one cares to find it’, Candace Lang wrote in 1882 (Anderson 2011 p.1), thus acknowledging a major problem for anyone who studies this topic: if the writer is always implicated in the work, any writing may be judged to be autobiographical depending on how one reads it (Lang 1982 p.6). However, autobiography has also been recognised as an important testing ground for a range of ideas including selfhood and representation (Anderson 2011 p.1). What could be simpler to understand than the act of people representing what they know best, their own lives, or in this inquiry, their practice at work? Yet this act is anything but simple for the teller of his or her own story becomes in the act of narration, both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance and contemplation (Smith & Watson 2010).

According to Patten (2004), autobiographical accounts and comparable research have been classified under a variety of names. Similar classifications include terms such as

personal narratives, complete member research, personal ethnography, literary tales, lived experience, critical autobiography, self-ethnography, ethnographic memoir, narrative ethnography, and native ethnography, as well as many others (Ellis & Bochner 2000; Patten, 2004).

Autobiography has been the narrative methodology in a number of settings. Cotterill and Letherby (1993) include aspects of their autobiographies to explain their academic development and examine their experience of feminist research within sociology; Ellis and Bochner (1992) use their experience of abortion to elucidate an interpretative framework for such an epiphanous event; and Raddon (2002) uses autobiographical material in her reflexive account of combining mothering and academia. Haynes (2006) autobiographical inquiry is concerned with the lived experiences of accountants.

In Greek, *autos* denotes 'self', *bios* 'life' and *graphe* 'writing'. Taken together in this order, the words *self life writing* offer a brief definition of *autobiography*. 'We call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality' (Lejeune cited in Smith & Watson 2010). *Life* is expanded to include *how* one had become who he or she is at a given moment in an on-going process of reflection. Autobiography is often referred to as 'the telling of a life' (McIlveen 2008), but it is more than this. Autobiography 'is always a re-presentation, that is, a re-telling, since the life to which it supposedly refers is already a kind of narrative construct. Life, is always, necessarily, a tale' (Malloy 1991 p.5). Autobiography is a 'retrospective narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality'. (Lejeune cited in Marcus p.91)

Most autobiographies are written from the first person singular perspective. This is fitting because autobiography is usually a story one tells about oneself. The value of autobiography is seen to lie in its insider quality (Marcus 1994). It would not naturally follow then that the writer would recount his or her past from a second or third person perspective. Jean Quigley confirms this point in her book *The Grammar of Autobiography* by saying that 'as soon as we are asked about ourselves, to tell our autobiography, we start to

tell stories. We tell what happened, what we said, what we did' (Quigley 2000). Autobiographers write simultaneously from externalised and internal points of view, taking themselves as both subject and object, or thematising that distinction. (Smith & Watson 2010). Autobiographies self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history and ethnographic explanation (Ellis & Bochner cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2003). The sensibility of the use of self in research was revealed by Ellis when she asked 'who would make a better subject than a researcher consumed by wanting to figure it all out?' (Ellis 1991 p30). Bochner (2001) objected to the assertion that a focus on the self is decontextualized. Those who complain that personal narratives emphasise a single speaking subject fail to realise that no individual voice speaks apart from a societal framework of co-constructed meaning.

Autobiography is a technique of self representation that is not a fixed form but is in constant flux (Holt 2003). Despite disagreements concerning how inclusive the category of autobiography should be, there are characteristics that are common to the majority of autobiographical works (Berryman 1999). These features are the grammatical perspective of the work, the identity of the self, and self-reflection and introspection.

Autobiography is a self-representational practice that is complexly situated within cultures and is incorporated with postmodernist techniques and critiques. Postmodernism's performance of questioning not only intersects with but powerfully structures contemporary interest in autobiography (Ashley 1994).

Autobiography is a form of introspection. When authors write about their past, it is not free from emotions. Revealing character's intentions, thoughts, and emotions is another way that the narrator evaluates why events occurred as they did. By explaining what happened in the past, the author is able to express to the reader how the self evolved. The self-now is the person he or she is because of the events of the past. William Maxwell said 'what we refer to confidently as memory-meaning a moment, a scene, a fact that has been subjected to a fixative and therefore rescued from oblivion is really a form of storytelling that goes on continually in the mind and often changes with the telling. Too many conflicting emotional interests are involved

for life ever to be wholly acceptable and possibly it is the work of the storyteller to rearrange things so that they conform to this end' (Quigley 2000).

Autobiography is a form of witnessing which matters to others (Anderson 2011). People are interested in the actual lives of others and want to know about others' pasts and feelings and desires (Anderson 2011; Quigley 2000). The explanation for the special appeal of autobiography is a fascination with the self and its profound, its endless mysteries (Anderson 2011). Autobiography is a way to organise the story of a life and reflect on the past in order to better understand the present. Kennett (1999) concurs with other advocates of self-reflection, saying that 'writing cultural autobiography allows students to reflect on the forces that have shaped their character and informed their sense of self' (p. 231). The re-telling of a life through autobiographical writing is another method of creating field texts that capture 'tension between self and others, of generating a reflection on the fluctuating place of the subject within its community' (Clandinin & Connelly 1994 p.9).

Autobiographers are the ultimate participants in a dual participant-observer role, having privileged access – in some cases, monopolistic access – to their own inner experience' (Merton 1988 cited in Stanley 1993 p.43). Here the autobiographer is the 'insider' who can also take on 'outsider' attributes as the source of privileged access to a particular kind of knowledge. There is a growing trend for researchers working in a diverse range of settings to view themselves as simultaneously being a subject (or the subject) as well as the researcher. Researchers working in disciplines as diverse as marketing (Reid & Brown 1996), performance studies (Varner 2000) and disability studies (Mairs 1996) are working with autobiographical data.

In a research context, it is the author who chooses what is worth noticing, what has the most meaning in their subject's experience (Mason 2002). Combining autobiography with the experiences of interviewees then becomes more possible. 'Qualitative writing becomes very much an unfolding story in which the writer gradually makes sense, not only of the data, but of the total experience of which it is an artefact....the voice and person of the researcher as a writer not only becomes a major ingredient of the written study, but has to be evident for meaning to become clear' (Holliday 2002 p.131). Usher provides an additional rationale for using

autobiography in research in that ‘autobiographies tend to be read through the need for a ‘human’ presence in the writing, a need to locate the person ‘behind’ the text. Once discovered, this presence seems to guarantee both the sincerity and the authenticity of the self of the story’ (Usher 1998, p.21). This combination of autobiography and narrative enables the researcher to give insight into complex worlds but also to examine their own identity and world view and explore this through their writing which will enable the reader further insight but also help them to consider factors that might influence their perspective and in turn the usefulness of their research (Trahar 2009).

Qualitative research and ethnography in particular is by its very nature interpersonal and intimate. Fieldwork relies upon the establishing and building of relationships with significant others in the field (Coffey 1999). By presenting detailed autobiographical accounts of fieldwork, the collection emphasises the role of the researcher as active participant and author. The autobiographical mode of ethnographic writing reflects wider cultural emphasis on self-revelation and confession and an appeal to subjectivity and lived experience. Placing the autobiographical and the narrated self at the heart of the analysis can be viewed as a mechanism for establishing authenticity. Texts are written, shaped and authored by a knowing subject who has experienced the fields. Autobiographical writings can present fragmented and multiple selves, embedded in and connected to the field and text in often complex ways (Coffey 1999).

In autobiographies, the focus on self and our practice, as researchers and practitioners, requires that we reveal, in all its complexity and as authentically as we can, what we do, how and why we do it and what this means about us and the field or context in which we operate (Argyris & Schön 1977; Atkinson 1999; Bish 1992). The dynamic interaction between these variables is at the centre of our view of autobiographical enquiry and why we think it is inherently messy. We must write about what we really prefer not to write about. It is not about presenting ourselves in a good light - in charge, competent, controlled, organised and so on, or how we might like to be seen. Rather, it is about writing rich, full accounts that include the messy stuff - the self-doubts, the mistakes, the embarrassments, the inconsistencies, the projections and that which may be distasteful. It is about writing all of it (Cherry 2000; Prideaux, 1991). This type of autobiographical

data is quite different to what is usually presented in a conventional memoir or autobiography. The data we gather for autobiographical research, particularly where there is a focus on reflecting upon our own practice is often disconnected, irrational and illogical.

The boundaries between self-indulgence and reflexivity are fragile and blurred. There will always be the question about how much of ourselves to reveal. Moreover there is a question of balance between the voice of ourselves, as knowing subject/object, and the desire to recognise and reveal the voices of others (Coffey 1999).

Smith and Watson (2010) define the components of autobiographical subjects – memory, experience, identity, embodiment and agency. The autobiographer depends on access to *memory* to narrate the past in such a way as situate that experiential history within the present. Memory is the source, authenticator and destabiliser of autobiographical acts. While the *experience* represented in an autobiographical narrative seems merely personal, it is anything but that. Mediated through memory and language, ‘experience’ is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present. Experience is the process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject owning certain identities in the social realm, identities constituted through material, cultural and psychic relations. Autobiographical acts involve narrators in ‘*identifying*’ themselves to the reader. That is, writers make themselves known by acts of identification and by implication, differentiation. Social organisations and symbolic interactions are always in flux, therefore identities are provisional. What may be a meaningful identity one day or in one context may not be culturally and personally meaningful at another moment or in another context. Autobiographical narrators come to consciousness of who they are, of what identifications and differences they are assigned or what identities they might adopt through the discourses that surround them. The body is a site of autobiographical knowledge because memory itself is *embodied*. And autobiography is a site of embodied knowledge because autobiographical narrators are embodied subjects. Autobiography inextricably links memory, subjectivity and the materiality of the body – ‘our lives in and as bodies profoundly shape our sense of identity’ (p.49). We tend to read autobiographical narratives as acts and thus proof of human *agency*. They are sites of agentic narration where people control the interpretation of their



lives and stories and expressing ‘true’ selves. However, we must recognise that the issue of how subjects claim, exercise and narrate agency is far from simply a matter of free will and individual autonomy. Readers often conceive of autobiographers as telling unified stories of their lives, as creating or discovering coherent selves. But both the unified story and the coherent self are myths of identity. For there is no coherent ‘self’ that predates stories about identity, about ‘who’ one is. Nor is there a unified, stable, immutable self that can remember everything that has happened in the past. We are always fragmented in time, taking a particular perspective on the moving target of our pasts, addressing multiple and disparate audiences. Perhaps it is more helpful to approach autobiographical telling as a performative act (Smith & Watson 2010).

Autobiographers can make texts aesthetic and evocative by using techniques of ‘showing’ which are designed to bring ‘readers into the scene’— particularly into thoughts, emotions, and actions—in order to ‘experience an experience’ (Ellis 2004 p.142). Most often through the use of conversation, showing allows writers to make events engaging and emotionally rich. ‘Telling’ is a writing strategy that works with ‘showing’ in that it provides readers some distance from the events described so that they might think about the events in a more abstract way. Adding some ‘telling’ to a story that ‘shows’ is an efficient way to convey information needed to appreciate what is going on, and a way to communicate information that does not necessitate the immediacy of dialogue and sensuous engagement (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011).

In our engagement with others we learn who we are and who we ought to be, and so insert ourselves into the culture in which we live, leaving no clear distinction between our sense of ourselves and others (Elliott 2001). Thus, the self draws upon the cultural and discursive resources at its disposal in a particular historical setting. Complete social determinism is avoided, however, by making a distinction between the social ‘me’ (how others see us) and the ‘I’, which is more autonomous and driven by internal needs and desires. As Reedy and Haynes (2002) point out, the significance of this idea in a discussion of narrative is that constructing an autobiography is partly a conversation between the ‘I’ and the ‘me’, as well as a dialogue with others.

Lawler (2000) suggests we all tell stories about our lives, both to ourselves and to others; and it is through such stories that we make sense of our selves, of the world, and of our relationships to others. Chamberlayne et al (2000 p.7) argue that 'to understand oneself and others, we need to understand our own histories and how we have come to be what we are. We make our own history but not under conditions of our own choosing, and we need to understand these conditions of action more, if our future making of our own history is to produce outcomes closer to our intentions and projects'. Knowledge about the self does not simply exist: rather it is produced and reproduced in specific relations of social and political power, and in response to specific social and political pre-occupations Knowledge is not wholly from within, therefore, as the narratives that make up people's stories, through which they make sense of their lives, are linked to broader social narratives (Somers & Gibson 1994).

Gergen and Gergen (2003) discuss how investigators explore in depth the ways in which their personal histories saturate the inquiry. Readers and audiences are invited to share in the emotional experience of the author (Jones 2002). The test of such texts and performances comes down to whether they invoke in readers a 'feeling that the experience described is authentic, that it is believable and possible' (Ellis 1995 p.318). The juxtaposition of self and subject matter is used to enrich the report. The investigator reveals his work as historically, culturally and personally situated. Every individual must create his self with the aid of his individual ability to link his past to the future (Svensson 1997). One's personal cultural competence is then decisive for who one becomes, the identity one acquires. A sure self-identity is important if one is to be able to identify what one wants, which in turn expresses who one is. The choice directly reflects the self. Recognising the choice is a fundamental precondition for reflexivity (Giddens 1992). One fulfils oneself as subject and is constituted as object. Identity is not a given which a person learns just by living, but presupposes a self-aware reflexive process – 'one must create one's own identity' (Giddens 1992 p.52).

There are criticisms and weaknesses concerning autobiography. Using autobiography, narrative and reflection on experience is still challenged as being problematic in terms of impact on practice. Enhancing the researchers' practice cannot be done merely by imparting his or her thoughts and ideas in a creative way - it needs the discipline and bolster of academic research (Brooker & Macpherson 1999). Following an article

motivated by conference sessions on teacher research where teachers 'reported' their classroom experiences, the following comment was made – ‘these insider accounts were grounded in practice, were interesting, reflected a deep sense of commitment on the part of the teller and were seemingly appreciated by other conference participants. This experience raised two questions in our mind: What had been the contribution of these stories to the audiences understanding of the social practice that they had represented? How had they added to the theory about that practice?’ (Brooker & Macpherson 1999 p.208). They went on to challenge such accounts of practitioner research calling them ‘little more than picturesque journeys of self-indulgent descriptions of 'this is what I did'. There is also the potential for romanticising experience (Silverman 1993) and of being narcissistic when one’s life is up for scrutiny, but, ‘it (autobiography) is an evolving method and this idea needs to be exposed and then corrected’ (Grumet 1981). The potential to write about oneself and one’s experience and for it to be meaningful and academically rigorous however, need not be mutually exclusive. Mykhalovskiy (1997) suggests that autobiography is not necessarily narcissistic or self-indulgent and denounces such a challenge based on a belief that autobiography can be productive in ways we think about the process of writing. His argument is that the personal experience present in the text can be a source of insightful analysis. Haynes (2006) rejects the notion of bias and embraces subjectivity as a means of understanding human lived experience and the physical, political, and historical context of that experience.

One criticism of autobiography is that the author is in some way driven by an inner compulsion to write about the self and that the autobiographical act must involve a degree of difficulty and struggle both in ‘grasping’ the self and in communicating it (Marcus 1994). A fundamental question is what is the truth status of autobiographical disclosure? How do we know whether and when a narrator is telling the truth? And what difference would that make? We might respond by asking what we expect life narrators to tell the truth about. And truth for whom and for what? Autobiographical truth resides in the intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life. The multifacetedness inherent in autobiographical writing produces a polyphonic site of indeterminacy rather than a single, stable truth. ‘Neither the person or the text can reveal any single

or final truth, but both can provide activities of interpretation in which the reader is compelled to join' (Smith & Watson 2010 p.17).

In summary, autobiographical narratives offer a valuable means of understanding and interpreting the identities of individuals within social and professional contexts in which they are formed. Autobiography as a methodological principle links epistemology and ontology with methodology and the narrative forms an important part of identity construction within the cultural, social and political practices of which it is a part, and which it is also capable of perpetuating.

### **The Operational Aspects - Collecting Data**

I considered how apposite potential data collection activities were for an autobiographical narrative and whether these had any precedent within published autobiographical literatures. I did not want to create a false (Harter 1983) self and so to counter this potential criticism I included colleague's data as part of my research activities. The data collection methods comprised my introductory life autobiography, a series of one-to-one and focus groups and a personal journal based upon events, critical incidents and observations (Figure 8).

Writing my introductory life autobiography (Appendix 1) was the first data collection activity I undertook. This was the initial project as part of the Guided Doctorate programme I had commenced at the University. It was the first time that I had undertaken such a piece of work and I relished the challenge. Giddens (1991) refers to the self as being reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his/her biography. The experience of writing my introductory autobiography helped me to understand how my identity had been constructed and encouraged me to reflect upon the person I am today through my memories, thoughts and life events. 'The negotiation between the self of the present and the self/selves of the past is an inherent part of telling one's life story' (Byrne 2003). I was able to identify a number of themes, including my family, education, work and social activities that I considered had shaped my life. Autobiography can be used to reach back into the past to analyse identity formation and self-definition (Eakin 1985). My learning from this piece of work was realising a sense of determination and optimism that I have, aspects that may have contributed to my leadership at work. I also have weaknesses which are

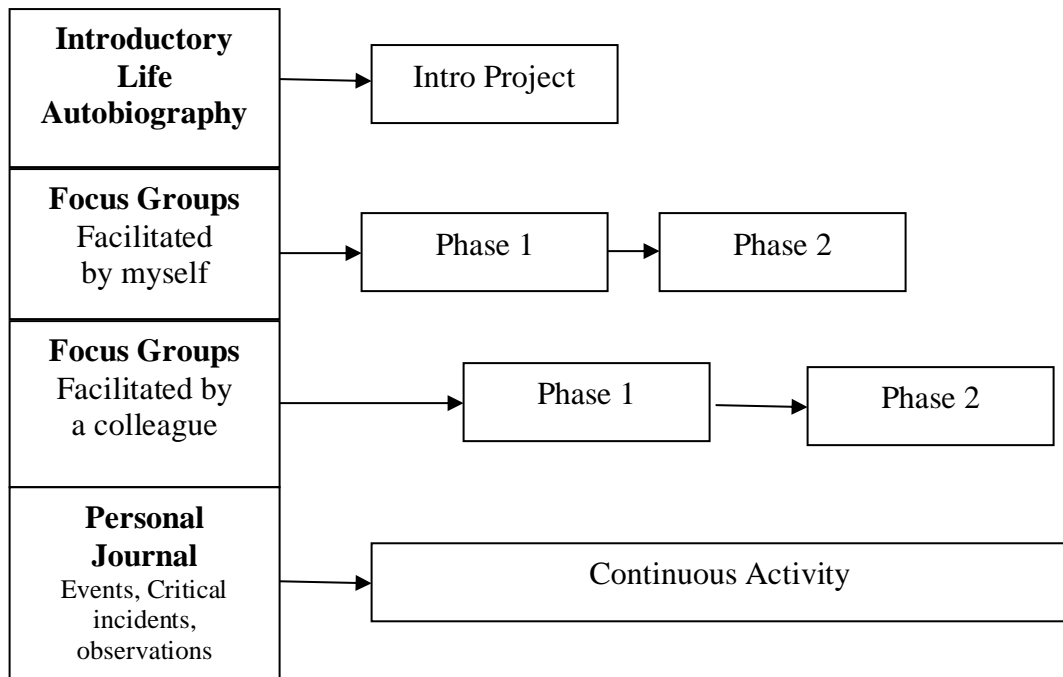


Figure 8: Data Collection Activities

Source: The Author

\*One-to-one interviews held with Marketing Manager 1, Marketing Manager 2, Creative Controller, Chief Executive, Trading Director, Retail Director, Buying Controller, General Manager

equally evident whilst at work. This valuable piece of writing set the scene for the study of my practice at work and I had a glimpse of how my attitudes and values had come to be.

***Justification for the Use of Interviews***

My introductory life autobiography was followed by other data collection activities which ran in parallel. The first of these concerned a series of one-to-one interviews and focus groups. In my study, interviews were a significant data collection activity, and there is clear evidence in the literature that illustrated the use of interviews as a main source of data within narrative studies. Examples of one to one interviews include the story of a student who uses personal writing, reflection and a series of highly interactive interviews with individuals and groups in her study (Ellis & Bochner 2003); semi-structured narrative interviews were used to examine what role communities of practice play within the lives of those who conduct autoethnographic research (Keefer 2010); and interviews were used to explore the processes of

subjectivity and the production of self (Byrne 2003). There are also examples of the use of focus groups, where Ritchie and Barker (2005) used focus groups in a study on the experiences of polyamorous women, and a research project about social practices in the college classroom involved group sessions and in-depth interviews with college students in northwest Ohio (Mitra 2010).

Given that interviews are an accepted data collection activity, I adapted previous formats to meet the purpose of my inquiry. This was in two respects. First, in my one-to-one interviews, the emphasis changed from a mutual concern of researcher and participants to focus solely on aspects of myself as the research subject. Second, the focus groups also focused on myself as subject and were facilitated by a third person, a senior colleague of mine, instead of myself. I expand below on my reasons and justification for adapting proven interview structures in other studies to what I believe are previously untried interview formats.

First, postmodernism opened new freedoms in methodologies and methods of data collection (Ellis 2004). 'Interviewing and interviewers must necessarily be creative, forgot how-to rules and adapt themselves to the ever-changing situation they face' (Fontana & Frey 2000 p.657). There is no right or wrong way to use interviews in collecting data. In a postmodern context, new interpretations of interviewing should be encouraged in an autobiographical inquiry to allow for non-traditional forms of inquiry and expression (Wall 2006).

Second, it is a generally accepted view that interviews per se are an accepted data collection activity for qualitative inquiries. . In my inquiry I am at the centre of my research as subject and researcher and looked to include the cultural perspective of my setting. My interviews with participants would enable me to make sense of events by constructing self-narratives that are 'properties of social accounts or discourses' (Gergen & Gergen 1988 p.19). As research is a co-creation through the postmodern notion of multiple selves and the influences of selves upon each other (Etherington 2004), interviewing cultural members is a way of making characteristics of a culture familiar to outsiders (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011).

Third, there are liabilities associated with the construction of a personal self, including the potential for constructing a false self that does not mirror one's authentic experiences (Harter 1983). I wanted to avoid this situation and the possibility of criticism for being self-indulgent, narcissistic and introspective (Sparkes 2000; Atkinson 1997). Other data, such as interviews concerning self, can confirm or triangulate one's own opinions (Duncan 2004). Indeed, it is suggested that researchers seek research participants so that a personal topic can be illuminated by a variety of perspectives (Moustakas 1990 cited Wall 2006).

Fourth, I considered that although my study focused on myself as subject, this could be interpreted as a mutual concern of myself and my colleagues with whom I worked with. I would be attempting to link my personal experiences to issues in my social world (Holt 2003). If the contribution of my culture could improve my self-understanding and future practice, then a wider audience i.e. my colleagues, could also benefit.

Fifth, there was a methodological requirement to be adhered to in the collection and analysis of data in terms of rigour and producing a scholarly account (Duncan 2004). All of my interviews complied with such requirements and as such can be viewed as comparable to all other interview formats used in qualitative research.

Finally, regarding the use of a facilitator in the focus groups, I referred to a postmodern context where many ways of knowing and inquiring are legitimate and that no one way should be privileged - new and unique ideas of the researcher can be included (Wall 2006). All assumptions in research methods are questioned and we are encouraged to 'abandon all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives....and prejudices as resources for... study (Vidich & Lyman cited in Wall 2006). In this spirit, the use of a third person to facilitate the focus groups provided further triangulation to my data. There are precedents for this approach within the literature. Third-persons have been used to establish the context for an interaction, report findings, and present what others do or say (Cauley cited in Ellis, Adams, Bochner 2011). A third party was used in the research published by Smith (2005) which involved therapists in the subjects' rehabilitation following a brain

injury. A peer de-briefer and interviewer conducted the interviews to assist the author of an inquiry into teaching at an American university (Skipp 2010).

### *Organising the Interviews*

I now describe the operational aspects of organising and implementing the interviews, how the schedule was managed and how the programme developed into a second phase of one-to-one interviews and the emergence of focus groups. From the range of potential interview formats that can be conducted (Cohen & Manion 1994), I organised a series of one-to-one interviews with colleagues. These were the focus of my attention at the early stage of data collection. I planned to run sufficient interviews to reflect my work practice and give me a level of assurance that despite my inherent subjectivity I was attempting to be 'fair' to myself and my colleagues. I selected participants that comprised my peers, direct reports and directors. I was acutely aware of the subjectivity involved in selecting those to be interviewed. My criterion was that each should have had some experience of my practice and to include a mix of colleagues that I worked closely or less frequently with. I was also aware that my selection of participants could be influenced by my relationship with the colleague - did I like the person, did I get on with them (or not) and what would they say about me? I thought that to stay within the boundaries of my own department was too narrow a focus. For a robust analysis, I required views from colleagues in other departments. I was mindful of these factors as I made a list of names that I considered met my criteria. I proposed the following as research participants - the chief executive, trading director, retail director, two marketing managers, the creative controller, a buying controller and a general manager. Their reporting structure in terms of the organisational hierarchy is shown in Figure 9.

Within these eight colleagues, three were from the marketing department, one was my direct line director, another director, two were peers and one the chief executive. I considered this was a balanced choice of participants and would alleviate any potential bias from my own three direct reports. The choice of participants reflected the concept of a 360 degree review, an activity that all participating in my research had taken part in over the year preceding the start of my research and were thus familiar with.



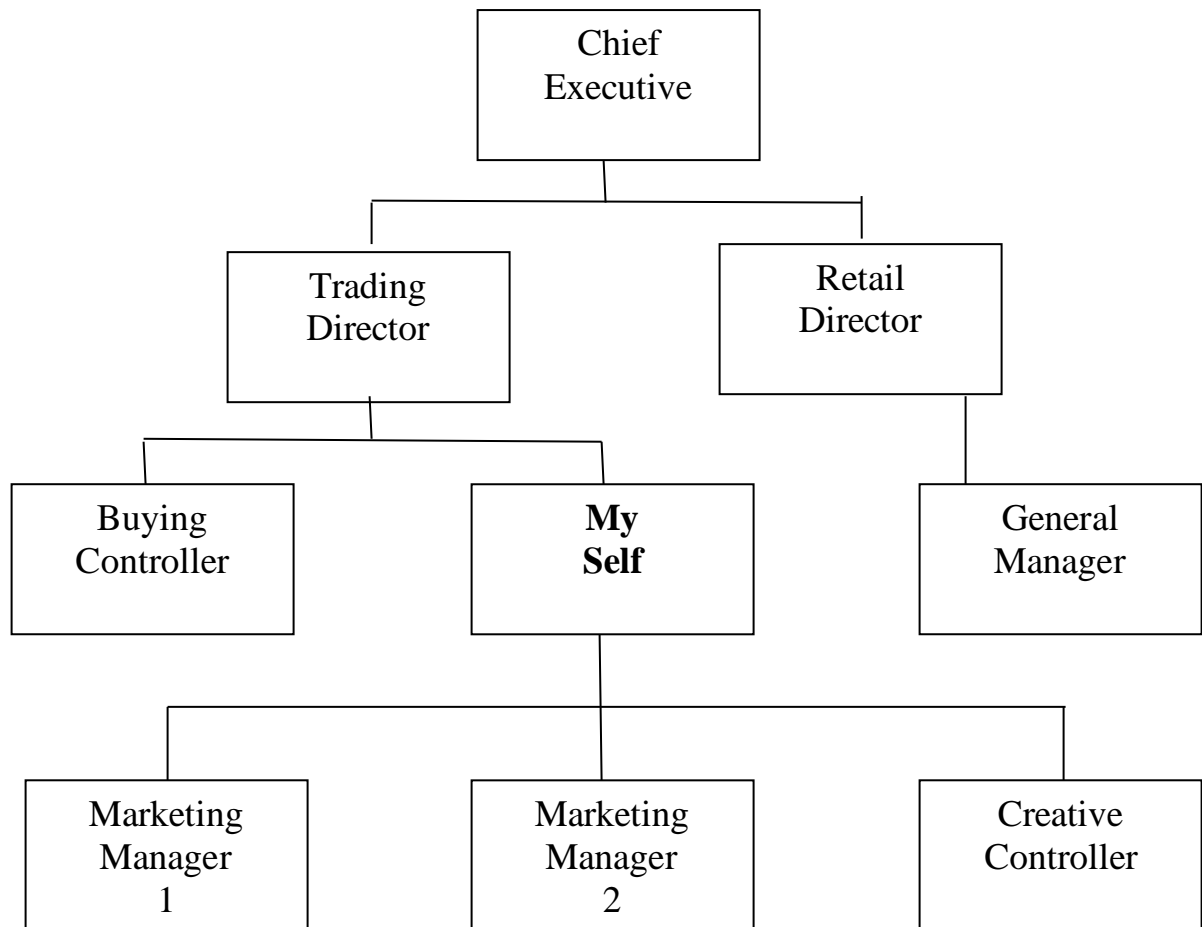


Figure 9: Reporting Structure of the Researcher & Participants

Source: The Author

I was cognisant of the possibility that a potential participant from my proposed list may not have agreed to participate. In case this had happened, another two names were held as back up to maintain the width of interviews I considered necessary.

I approached each potential participant in various settings, for example, following a meeting we were both in or arranged to meet in my or their office/desk, just for an initial five minute chat. When we met, I explained the background and the purpose of their involvement. Several colleagues had a few questions immediately, mainly concerning the interview dates and whether they had to prepare anything formal e.g. notes or a PowerPoint presentation. This was a possible concern with regard to how much effort they would have to put in to the interview and I made it clear that any preparation or contribution they felt needed was their decision. I said a short written

brief (Appendix 2) would be discussed if they wished to participate. At this point, we finished the meeting and I gave the colleague the opportunity to say yes or no in a few days' time once they had thought about my request. This phase of activity took about two weeks to complete, with some colleagues being away or not available until I could see them.

After about another two weeks, most colleagues had replied positively to my request. A few days later all had confirmed they would like to take part. I was pleased with this response, especially as the majority would not have felt as if they had to take part. Even my three marketing colleagues were very positive about the interviews, no doubt seeing this as a good opportunity to say what they thought. I then sent the brief by email and asked for a meeting date to run through it and answer any questions the participant may have. Again, those meetings took about two weeks to set up.

We eventually met and I briefed each on the purpose of their participation, thanking them for taking part and asked each to appreciate the importance, relevance and confidentiality of the data. For my part, I assured participants of anonymity and that pseudonyms would be used in the final thesis. I also would keep all data confidential and would only be used in the confines of my study. We read through the brief outlining the purpose of the interview and this ensured all had the same information prior to the interviews. I explained that I would be facilitating the interview, which would be semi-structured to cover various aspects of my practice that I had identified but also open-ended to give an opportunity to include further comments that participants felt were relevant. The main concerns raised by participants included their understanding of the width of the inquiry, for instance, whether it should focus on current rather than past behaviours, can they be "brutally truthful" and how long the interview would last for. The participants had not been involved in this type of research before and given this new experience, I felt that I was putting them under pressure by asking for their honest feelings and views. I also stressed the need for a balanced feedback with both positive and negative comments. All were happy for the interviews to be recorded. From their reactions, I suspected some were keener than others to participate and probably took it more seriously, understanding what I was trying to do. This was an interesting time to conduct my research, set against the background of attempts to change the organisational culture through a customer

leadership programme. There was therefore some understanding of my inspiration to undertake my research and I think this helped in participants being willing to take part in the interviews. At the end of the meeting, we looked at diaries and most were able to confirm a day and time within an average of two weeks. It took a little more time to finalise the remaining three dates, which were set for within a month of the briefing meeting.

A few days before the interviews were due to start, I felt apprehensive. I had many questions – would the participants treat the interview seriously? Would they prepare and give examples of my behaviour as I had asked them to do? Would they give me quality feedback and allow the time for the interview to be properly conducted? Would they be fair and give negative as well as positive comments? The interviews were primarily non-directive and I hoped that participants would comment on the key themes as I saw them. If not, I would focus the interview to specific areas through prompting participants. How would I react to negative feedback? What would happen if the interview went wrong? Will the tape recorder work? What if the participant had nothing to say? Would the participant turn up for the interview? I rationalised these thoughts by saying to myself all will be ok. Then two colleagues rang me to say that unfortunately they will have to postpone their interview. That put the schedule back by a week and we eventually re-arranged the two interviews at the back end of the schedule.

### ***Theoretical & Practitioner Interview Issues – Demand Characteristics***

As the programme of interviews began, I became aware of the relationship between myself as interviewer and my interviewees and this raised the issue of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005). Demand characteristics – the unspoken expectations conveyed by one part to another – are to be found in all social situations and influence all members of these social arrangements (Brenneis 1996). In a one-to-one interview, this phenomenon has the potential to be particularly acute. I can verify from my experiences that I was aware prior to an interview of the possibility that the participant may want to be seen to be giving ‘hoped for’ responses to the points noted on the brief or as the interview progressed into other areas. I anticipated that by trying to create a relaxed atmosphere in the interview this would encourage the participant to report their true feelings and thoughts – I had stressed all

along that I welcomed positive and negative, honest feedback and areas for improvement. This could paradoxically have been interpreted as a trick on my part to illicit feedback that the participant may reluctantly be enticed into revealing. For some participants, particularly the directors, I had no grounds to think that their comments were anything but genuine and not influenced by my reactions during their interviews. For my own team members, I had a feeling that some were looking to ingratiate themselves with me at times, although I also received some forceful negative comments which balanced the data. Nevertheless, to ask for feedback in a face-to-face situation is likely to be unintentionally or inadvertently influenced by cues from myself during the interview.

There was a physical aspect to the interviews. Looking and listening at the participant as he or she spoke, thinking about the words, having internal feelings and emotions and then responding either through speaking or maybe some movement with my hands, or shuffling, was part of the interview experience. “How much do I reveal of myself to my colleague the participant in the interview in response to what is being said” was a question I repeatedly asked myself. A smile or nod by myself when a response was given, the tone of my voice, a questioning look - ‘bodily dispositions, a style of speech’ (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Adams 2006) - may have influenced the participant in saying the next comment. As I knew all participants as colleagues, I had considered the potential for any changes to their behaviours to occur whilst in the interviews and in practice there were no major discernible indications for me to think their behaviour was trying to conform to my expectations. Given the social and subjective nature of my inquiry, demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005) are present in all social situations and no doubt will have been evident at certain stages of the interview programme.

### ***Theoretical & Practitioner Interview Issues – Power***

An associated theme concerned the dynamics of power within interviews (Hoffmann 2007). I was aware of the context of the interview and of a feeling of power as a result of being the organiser and subject of the interview. The choice of location for the interview was a case in point. Should this be in the participants office where they would feel more comfortable or in my office, on ‘my territory’, signalling a physical expression of who was in control. In practice, interviews with two directors took place

in their office and the remainder in mine, which included the remaining director and the peer interviews. Interviewers are often cautioned to articulate and render transparent the supposed power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee, but the power in any interview shifts constantly (Trahar 2009). Research participants will often find ways to tell the stories they want to tell rather than, or perhaps as well as, those that they think the listener wants to hear. The researcher may bring his/her own agenda to the interview and want the participant to hear something of their experiences and opinions. I felt that I wanted to share my power with the participant in terms of allowing them to say what they wanted. I also recognised that the participant had significant power in the sense that they controlled their feedback – the extent to which they were prepared to identify and explain good or poor aspects of my practice. In many cases, this was vocalised, although I cannot say what aspects were not said perhaps because the participant was concerned about my reactions.

### ***Theoretical & Practitioner Interview Issues – An Insider Perspective***

Demand characteristics and power drew attention to me as a researcher and my subjective interpretation and bias (Dwyer & Buckle 2009) that may have arisen during the course of my inquiry. An insider is a researcher who conducts a study that is directly concerned with the setting in which they work (Galea 2009). The term ‘practitioner-research’ describes research conducted by practitioners within their own profession and autobiography is a term used to denote insider status (). As an insider (Maydell 2010) in my research, I was able to access myself from the position of others in my social world (McNay 2000) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). There were academic and practitioner values in this approach that justified the interview data that led to the research themes and constructions, although there are corresponding theoretical and methodological pitfalls that a qualitative researcher should be aware of.

I was situated as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004) in my inquiry with myself and my practice as the object of the research. My socially constructed identity (Mead 1934; Callero 2003) called for the inclusion of my social world (McNay 2000) in my research. The contribution of culture was implicit in my inquiry and counteracted any criticisms of self-indulgence, narcissism and introspection (Atkinson 1997; Holt 2003) by using myself as the only data source. I was not trying to become an insider

in the research setting – I was the insider. (Duncan 2004). This insider status frequently allows researchers more rapid and complete acceptance by their participants who are typically more open with researchers so that there may be a greater depth to the data gathered (Dwyer & Buckle 2009). I used my own experiences in a culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interactions. I was a boundary-crosser and the role can be characterised as that of a dual identity (Reed-Danahay 1997).

I was in a unique insider position because as well as being the researcher I was also from the same organisational culture as the participants (Smith 2005) and familiar with the informal structures of the organisation and how to get things done (Roth 2007). I had to balance my organisational role with the additional demands of a role of inquiry and research and I needed to be aware of how my roles influenced my view of the world (Coughlan & Holian 2007). ‘The qualitative researcher’s perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others – to indwell – and at the same time to be aware of how one’s own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand’ (Maykut & Morehouse 1994 p.123). To address the insider position in my inquiry and the value of accessing self from the position of others, a relevant theoretical foundation for the study of self is social constructionism and a methodological framework is positioning theory (Maydell 2010).

Proponents of social constructionism argue that people are products of their interactions with each other and with the immediate environment, both physical and social (Burr 1995; Shweder 1990). We do not function independently; we are all deeply interconnected with each other (Gergen 1991) and undergo social construction by others (Much 1995). This means that depending on circumstances, identity will be subject to change and identity constructions will bear the traces of the ever changing life around, therefore making identity relational (Gergen 1991; Iedema & Caldas-Coulthard 2008). In studying the self, multiple reflections by others are relevant which elicit a variety of expressions of self. These expressions can be achieved by engaging in the process of positioning self versus others. Harré and Van Langenhove (1999) suggest that social identity is the representation of an individual across various interactions with others, reflective of his/her place in different relationships. Social

constructionism can be used as a means to understand the nature of the knowledge production and therefore can provide a researcher with philosophical scaffolding in the process of making sense of the research (Maydell 2010). Social constructionism emphasises the significance of others' involvement in the construction of the sense of self, as the data are considered to be co-created by both the researcher and the research participant (Cromby & Nightingale 1999).

Positioning theory helps with investigating how the self is constructed in discourse from the perspective of an individual (self-positioning) and of a wider society (other-positioning). While telling stories about their lives, people have to claim certain positions for themselves in relation to others and negotiate these positions with the way they are positioned by others (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). Autobiographers can engage the concepts of positioning theory to produce a holistic representation of self as articulated from inside and the identity construction as reflected by others. Through negotiating self- and other-positioning in interactions with others, the researcher crafts his/her own story from the data co-constructed with the help of others, by rearticulating created meanings and adding new ones (Lincoln & Denzin 2003).

In my inquiry, discourse was created between myself and others and the relevant experiences in which I engaged in socially, culturally and personally (Starr 2010). The process of the data analysis enabled adequate interpretation and addressed the issues of subjectivity and complexity of the data (Maydell 2010). The themes I developed on the basis of the interview data represented several main patterns of identity construction derived from my participants. My in-depth interviews presented the best strategy to gain the data from others which provided an abundance of meanings and facilitated my self-awareness and understanding in order to create my practice.

Although this theoretical and methodological approach afforded access from which to begin my research and substantiate the contribution of my culture to the construction of my identity, there were dangers that the researcher should be aware of. These included the organisational and personal context of the interviews, the dynamics of the interview in progress, the bias of the researcher and the presence of politics.

The organisational and personal context of the interviews is to be considered. Typically an insider researcher must cope with multiple roles that may be characterised by conflicting goals (Roth 2007). As an insider researcher, I was first an employee of my organisation with a functional role and second a researcher. I had to balance these roles and was aware of how they may influence my view of the world as well as how they are perceived by others. I needed to be able to make choices as to when to step into and out of each role. The interventions were conducted outside of the context of my organisational responsibilities (Roth 07) and this may have created role confusion, role conflict, and role overload (Coughlan & Holian 2007). Augmenting one's normal organisational membership roles with the research inquiry can be difficult and awkward for insider researchers (Goughlan 2007). Within their organisational roles they are managing within the boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) of formal hierarchical and functional roles and informal roles of collegueship and possible friendship. My organisational role demanded my total commitment whilst the research was an additional role of my choice and took a secondary place. This became a more detached, reflective, more theoretic position. This situation led to feelings of role detachment where at times I felt that my research was more important to me than my functional role. It was on odd feelings at times to come out of a work related meeting with a colleague who would in a matter of minutes become my research participant requiring a speedy change of roles for only later in the day to be back in a work related meeting with the same colleague, inevitably thinking about what was said at the interview.

The dynamics of the interview in progress are a potential danger for the researcher to be aware of. There was a danger that the interview was shaped and guided by my experiences rather than the participants (Dwyer & Buckle 2009). 'My empathy and enthusiasm for a subject may have kept them from considering certain aspects of their experience' (Armstrong 2001). There may be overidentification, over rapport (Glense 1999) as a result of a close working relationship or friendship. I thought at times that I was projecting (Hirschhorn 2000) my own needs onto the interview participant although this was balanced by my own receptivity and containing (Bion 1970) of the views and projections of others. Given my dual functional and researcher roles, there was the potential for a problem to arise if something was said, or conversely not said, in an interview by a colleague or myself. Interview demand characteristics (Brenneis



1996; de Munter 2005) were relevant and the possibility of the research situation affecting the functional situation. Had the participant's comments been compromised by a work situation? Did they have their own agenda for the interview? Are they holding back with their comments? Tailoring to what they think I want to hear? Are they being truthful? What influence has their subjectivity had on their comments? How would differ comments affect my reflexivity and interpretation of the data? These questions reflected my doubts and potential pitfalls in accessing myself from the position of others through the interview experience.

The issue of bias arose as it has been argued that the disadvantage of being an insider to the research is that the researcher is too close to the data and might not be able to objectively evaluate it (Roth 2007). A close awareness of one's own personal biases and perspectives might reduce the potential concerns associated with being an insider researcher (Dwyer & Buckle 2009) - 'there is no neutrality. There is only greater or lesser awareness of one's biases' (Rose 1985). I attempted to think in this way because I was trying to appreciate and represent the experience of the participants and to understand their perspective. I realised that I did not experience my practice and that my colleagues did. Someone who experienced my practice may see more clearly what was occurring and can override any self-deception on my part. This still left me with the question as to whether I interpreted what was said as it was intended – is my meaning or their meaning? My interpretation was subject to my biases and prejudices and it was only by surfacing the 'undiscussables' that they were resolved or addressed (Argyris 1990). My culture provided a stimulus through their data for me to reflexivity question myself. Had I not included interviews in my study, then this valuable perspective would have been missing.

There may be political implications to consider. Organisations are social systems and as such an integral part of organisational life is politics. Any form of action and research in an organisation has its political dynamics. Insiders have a preunderstanding of the organisation's power structures and politics and are able to work in ways that are in keeping with the political conditions without compromising their research (Goughlan 2007). Although my colleagues never said anything to me, I did consider at the time whether anyone wondered why I was undertaking my research, something that nobody else had done and was not a natural activity given the

culture of the organisation. Was I doing it to look good, to improve my chances of promotion, to say I have a doctorate to substantiate a sense of individuality? The answer to these questions is probably yes.

### ***Interviews in Progress***

Moving into the interview phase, I felt that the preparatory work had been of value in briefing all involved for the interviews and these took place in various offices at Peacocks head office in Cardiff. The average length of an interview was one hour and forty minutes, the longest being two hours and twenty minutes. I was slightly nervous at the beginning of the interview. This was the first time that I had facilitated interviews, although I had attended several consumer focus groups as an observer in my professional marketing role. But now I was the subject of the interview, a unique position to be in. We sat down, usually with a cup of tea or coffee, I asked if my colleague was ready, we looked at each other, my finger on the tape recorder, yes, we're ok to start, my finger pressed the button and we were off. Here are some examples taken from the transcripts of how the interviews began:

#### Interview with the Chief Executive

RA “So, on the 19th of October, we've got as long as it takes - it could be half an hour, it could be an hour and a half, it can be whatever you want to say. So having briefed you on the background, I'm interested in your views on Richard Antrum, my leadership practice. So one of the starting areas is that if you were to describe Richard Antrum to somebody else that didn't know me what are the types of things that you would be saying about me?”  
(Interview continued)

#### Interview with a General Manager

GM “Well if we start off with management and leadership style and basically how I see you as a person, the way that you are with your leadership and your management. I think in terms of management and leadership I think they are two completely different things anyway. And if somebody was to ask me – do you manage or do you lead I would certainly say that you lead rather than manage”  
RA “Is that a good thing or a bad thing?”  
(Interview continued)

#### Interview with the Trading Director

TD “so how do you want me to start then”

- RA “ok I’ll kick it off then - I’m not bothered what you say, but I do want to know. It’s all confidential. Not even the professor at the university will see this. Let’s start with giving me a general description of Richard Antrum, as if you were telling someone who didn’t know me”
- TD “explain it to a third party then”
- RA “yes that’s right”
- (Interview continued)

The interviews began in many ways, some described above and some that went straight into the points on the written brief. All participants were able to respond to the first couple of points from the brief and then the discussions moved quite quickly in a free flowing style involving both myself and the participant. I was conscious of ensuring each point was covered during the interview, but the spontaneity and improvisation of both participant and myself provided new and sometimes unexpected comments that contributed to producing rich data. During the interviews, I found myself reflecting not only on what the participant was saying, but also on my own emotions and responses. As the interviews progressed, I was contributing, listening and responding when appropriate and at the same time, reflecting on the participants words. There was both reflection in and on action (Schon 1987) taking place. I experienced many feelings during the interviews, including positive and negative reactions to what was being said, agreement or disagreement, being pleased or disappointed with myself, feelings of being misunderstood and an inner frustration with myself on hearing from colleagues that an action or comment made by myself had not been received in the manner I intended. I felt quite defensive at times and occasionally voiced my feelings, realising at the very moment of speaking that I was trying to justify perhaps the unjustifiable. Participants comments stimulated new thoughts and ideas from myself as the interviews progressed and in most cases these formed further points or questions. My subjectivity and emotions added context and layers to the story being told. There was a feeling of a cycle of conversations happening – new comments prompting further reflection and exploration of issues. It felt that there was an interactive process, different stories were emerging and becoming co-constructed (Chase 2005). In some respects, this had a feeling of ‘truth’ although I was still sceptical of interpreting the discussion in this way. I was aware of my thoughts and feelings and my bodily reactions to what I was hearing and my reflexivity became part of the data, contributing to creating new meanings for myself. In many cases, participants or myself prompted an immediate note from me to do

something, to put into action a response e.g. “I’ve heard what you say – now lets do something about it”. I found it quite natural to reflect upon a piece of data the moment it was available. Inevitably, the analysis would immediately begin, a semi-analysis in a moment in time akin to a reflection-in-action, and this had an influence on what followed. In many respects, the comments and data posed more questions than answers, a process which at times took the interview to unforeseen and deeper levels. Even though these were participants interviews, I wanted my voice to be heard. If a researcher’s voice is omitted from a text, the writing is reduced to a mere summary and interpretation of the works of others, with nothing new added (Clandinin & Connelly 1994).

Operationally, the interviews went broadly to plan in terms of their timing and the availability of myself and participants, although four interviews had to be re-scheduled given other meeting changes. I felt that each had sufficient time to say what was needed and that the interviews were not rushed. The tape recorder worked each time and I had back-up tapes should they be needed, which they were on a couple of occasions when the interview lasted longer than one-and-a-half hours.

### *A Serendipitous Moment*

Shortly after the interviews finished, I was chatting with one of the participants, a fellow general manager who among his other responsibilities was managing the company’s’ culture programme. We were discussing my research in the context of how departments were responding to the work he was doing and our discussion moved on to the marketing department. In a serendipitous moment, the conversation moved to one of us suggesting (and I can’t remember who) having a focus group (Ritchie and Barker 2005) of the three marketing participants from the one-to-one interviews. My colleague offered to facilitate as a third party (Smith 2005) and I remember him being very keen on the idea, suggesting this could be a way of finding out if there were any issues that had been unsaid in the one-to-one interviews and whether that data could be corroborated. Indeed, the importance of having a fellow researcher who can work collaboratively with the researcher in autobiographical research is recommended (Tenni, Smyth & Boucher 2003).

My colleague offered to organise the interview, transcribe the tapes and remove any participants names or other identity references from the transcripts. I would be given a typed script. I thought this was a good suggestion and would reveal some interesting data when compared to the individual transcripts whilst also providing triangulation to my analysis. Three weeks later I received the transcript. I had no involvement with the timing and operation of the interview and my colleague seemed very pleased with what had happened and the data produced from the interview. He said that I would be very interested in what had been said, that all three participants took part and at times became quite passionate. He was confident that the interview produced an honest assessment of my practice and that after the individual interviews, the participants understood what was required. I added the transcript to my interview folder ready for analysis.

### ***Other Data Collections***

Alongside interviews, there were other on-going data collection activities that ran in parallel with each other. My personal journal (Duncan 2004) included a diary of events, critical incidents, observations and personal anecdotes, highly relevant to an autobiographical study through the personal experience of the researcher and associated reflections. Keeping a journal helped me to become a 'reflexive spectator' (Kemmis 1985 p.160) and reflect on my actions and allowing my study to develop a critical perspective. My journals included my observations and reflections based upon my actions, my colleagues, discussions, meetings and informal day-to-day happenings which I observed as part of my organisational life, depicting lived experience. Often I would be in a meeting and write words or short notes to record my thoughts and feelings. I resisted using the idea of a dream here, but sometimes it seemed like one. I tried to relate these thoughts to leadership practice through the physical activities of my job i.e. the things I do, and the intangible aspects, my attitudes, emotions and motivations of how I understood my practice to be. I developed a self-reflexive retrospective account of when I started my job at Peacocks and enabled me to identify certain aspects of my practice at the beginning of my research. I then continued writing on average twice a week so that over a six year period I completed five A4 workbooks. These notebooks served the purpose of recording a variety of different experiences and helped to define and in some cases resolve inner conflicts. Some of

the happenings and major events I recorded were also referred to by participants in interviews, an interesting perspective on triangulation from differing data sources.

### **The Operational Aspects - Analysing Data**

I viewed the analysis phase as ‘a process of resolving data into its constituent components to reveal its characteristic elements and structure’ (Dey 1993 p.30). The central concern here was to ‘transform and interpret qualitative data in a rigorous and scholarly way, in order to capture the complexities of the social world we seek to understand’ (Coffey & Atkinson 1996 p.3). Given the depth and width of my data, I realised this was a challenging task. I anticipated that the literature models for data analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994; Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Dey 1993; Wolcott 1994) would provide a framework and guidance for this phase of my inquiry. In line with establishing interviews as the main data collection activity, my approach was to begin my analysis using the interview transcripts from which further data from other sources could be added, either to complement interview themes or to establish new areas for analysis. My aim was to analyse the data to produce a meaningful account, ‘producing a narrative that was authentic’ (McIlveen 2008)

An observation that became an important contributor at this stage was that data collection and data analysis are inextricably linked. There is not a point at which collection ends and analysis begins and vice versa. The minute data is available the analysis begins, generating reflexivity and questions as more data is collected. Where does this data fit in? What do I think? Where does it take me? Is this new information? How does it compare with other data from other sources? Does it look important or not? On a practical level, data analysis must start early in the research process to avoid too much data being collected and to ‘avoid the risk of drowning in the data’ (Tenni, Smyth & Boucher 2003). Even so, as the physical collection activities are completed and the analysis is under way, reflexivity generates new data as the analysis continues.

Autobiographical writing allows for the interpretation of the collected data to be analysed over time and additional memories included. The rigour in autobiographical writings is about the analysis and the analytical methods used to describe 'what is happening here!' The rigour involves moving back and forth with the data, being

personally entrenched and then moving back with a subjective and an objective view of the themes developing in layers (Tenni, Smyth & Boucher 2003).

I was aware of the position I was in and the power that was available to me in how I would use and interpret the data. I therefore approached the analysis with certain values that would underpin the usefulness of the data and my subsequent theory development. Despite my unavoidable subjectivity, which was present despite all preventions, I adopted the principles of honesty, fairness and rigor, aspects that I consider are part of my identity (Adams 2007). I minimised my defensiveness and resistance to difficult and unexpected data where the temptation was to disregard, ignore or rationalise the information and thereby reduce the insights it may generate. I needed to be aware of myself and my willingness to understand, confront and discover aspects of my practice, whether good, bad or indifferent and to learn and improve. These were the principles that were at the core of my data collection and analysis activities.

To bring order to the data, a ‘conceptual framework through which the actions or events being researched can be rendered intelligible’ (Dey 1993 p.39) was needed. Categorisation is a process of funnelling the data into relevant categories for analysis; classifying involves breaking up data and bringing it together again and making connections through identifying associations between different variables, so that patterns, regularities, variations and singularities in the data can be examined – ‘progressive focusing’ (Wolcott 1994 p.18). Identifying categories or themes is a challenging activity -

‘creating categories is both a conceptual and empirical challenge; categories must be grounded conceptually and empirically; they must be meaningful in relation to the data and in relation to other categories’  
(Dey 1993 pp.96-97)

Data reduction involved coding the data, the ‘stuff of analysis’ (Miles & Huberman 1994 p.56), allowing one to ‘differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information’. Coding is a means of providing new contexts for viewing and analysing data, through decontextualising and recontextualising the data (Tesch cited in Coffey & Atkinson 1996). Analysis is viewed as coding – ‘the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualised

and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data' (Strauss & Corbin 1990 p.57). Some themes are more obvious than others, and the researcher must think beyond the face value of the data in order to define the hidden and real explanations for behaviours and events. As Denzin and Lincoln (1994 p.46) state, 'alternating between collecting and analysing data allows for further verification of the hypotheses that are being developed'. The interpretation phase is potentially the most interesting and enlightening of the analysis. Delamont (cited in Coffey & Atkinson 1996) suggests that one should be 'looking for patterns, themes and regularities as well as contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities'. The term theoretical sensitivity refers:

'to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't...it is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense and well integrated'

(Strauss & Corbin 1990 p.42).

According to Dey (1993 p.94), 'we have to interpret the data in order to analyse it'. The analysis is based upon the researchers' interpretation of the data and is therefore filtered through the researchers' own perceptions. The researcher may misinterpret or chose to ignore some data and a third party could interpret the data in a different way. The importance of presenting a valid account that can be defended through the grounded nature of the inquiry, both conceptually and empirically, is paramount. Underlying this activity is the need to build a theory, 'a complex system of ideas through which we conceptualise some aspect of experience' (Dey 1993 p.51). The over-riding objective of analysis is to produce an intelligible, coherent and valid account (Dey 1993).

Using the concepts and principles outlined in the theory, my data encouraged me to think about themes early in the data collection phase and then into data analysis. Reading the data from interviews or from my personal journals and other sources, seeing words and phrases and then reflecting became the foundations for the themes, as I sought 'to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data' (Polkinghorne 1995 p.13).



To illustrate how I worked with the data following its origination, I describe the various stages involved using the example of an interview transcript.

The tapes from the interview were self-transcribed (Lapadat & Lindsay 1999) directly onto the pc for future editing and theme building. Halcomb (2006) emphasised the necessity to transcribe all audio recorded interview data verbatim. An extract from my journal describes this stage:

‘following each interview, I listened to the tape until a clear sentence was identified; I stopped the tape and typed the sentence into the pc; the tape had to be re-wound to ensure that the correct transcription had been made to include every word; I moved on to the next sentence and recorded this in the same way; the whole interview was eventually transcribed onto the pc. This was clearly a very time consuming activity but one that was essential and supported the authentic nature of the inquiry. I was also aware of any pauses, nuances and emphasis that I heard - I interpreted the tone of the conversation. I also had my memories of how the interview went – any difficult moments, emotions, defensiveness on my part or an unwilling interviewee. I was reading and interpreting the data with my subjectivity, creating my truth. These stories are partial and situated and I was applying my meanings to these experiences’  
(Personal Journal)

Each transcript was sent to participants for validation as a component of reliability (Creswell 2009) and to ask if there were any questions or changes they would like. I asked that the transcripts be kept confidential or destroyed. Most sent a quick email saying all was ok – ‘no changes required’.

Reflection became a dominant theme when transcribing and listening to the playback, hearing new points for the first time and interpreting the content in different ways to when the interview actually took place. This also happened when typing, where more thoughts were generated such as ‘did they really say that’, ‘I don’t agree with that’ and ‘I didn’t mean it like that!’ I was also becoming increasingly aware of key issues concerning this phase of the analysis - how can I bring all of this data together? Do I like what I am hearing? Can I ensure that the data I don’t like is still included? “I didn’t realise so much would come through”. I was conscious that the listening and transcribing was instigating some action, where I would write separately on some of the issues that were being raised; I thought ‘I must do something about this now’ and ideas and actions were listed for later follow up. I also analysed my role in the interview. On listening to the tapes, it was clear that I had used the interview to record my comments on many issues, either to explain my views in response to a participant's point, to record my thoughts as a reminder to myself for later inclusion in the analysis

or to record new ideas or thoughts which came to me during the interview. I was therefore reflecting on my contribution post interview which became an analysis stream in its own right. I saw reflection as a discipline and an art, enabling learning to take place through thinking about knowledge, actions and meanings of day-to-day happenings. I became more aware of myself and how I responded to situations around me. I recognised how reflection is linked to action (Schon 1987) and included a number of practical examples through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, including many instances of a 'stop and think' nature (van Manen 1995). Reflection took place at all points along the data collection and analysis journey, contributing to the identification and development of research themes.

Reading the finished transcripts highlighted the volume of 'peripheral' data contained in the scripts which would be edited at the next stage, but not without changing the meaning of what was said, a point I was very conscious of. The scripts also showed that there was a substantial body of quality data with comments, ideas and new interpretations of many areas that participants had observed in my practice. I found reading the transcripts of the focus groups conducted by my colleagues were revealing and this stimulated new avenues of analysis with a comparison between what was said in these 'confidential' groups and the one-to-one interviews, thus triangulating the data.

I then began the process of categorisation and theming of the data. I had a guide to major themes, pre-determined such as leadership, self and change, as a starting point. When reading an interview transcript, categorisation took place on two levels - data relevant to a pre-determined theme was identified and allocated to the relevant file; other data was identified and a new file created. Some data overlapped into two or more themes. I repeated the inclusion of the data into each theme. Breaking the data down, discarding unwanted data and then recontextualising the data to produce meaningful themes proved to be a long, inescapable but crucial process. The 'size' of the data ranged from 'chunky' paragraphs to sentences or to individual words, referred to as 'units of meaning' (Dey 1993 p.117). I was constantly aware of my subjectivity as the data was segmented into themes, aware of editing unwelcome comments and of bias. Given the volume of data, I put aside a significant proportion but only after ensuring if it was of limited or zero value.

Through this approach, research themes were identified and the outline of each saved within the relevant file. Here were the foundations of my inquiry and the construction of my practice. My interviews and experiences in doing so were a major data source with much time devoted to the refinement and interpretation of what was said. The analysis and themes were enriched further when other data collection activities were included – my autobiography and journal notes – where cross referencing prompted new reflection and strengthened theme construction.

I thus arrived at three themes identified from my data collection and analysis phases – self, change and leadership. I considered I had a rich resource of ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz 1973) to begin to construct my practice and theory. To assess whether any changes over time had taken place, I ran a second phase of interviews with the same colleagues using the themes identified from the data analysis of the first interviews. I approached these in exactly the same way as previously, and my colleague organised a second focus group. It was a mirror in terms of the structure of the first interviews, the difference being a more focused brief (Appendix 3). Although this phase had not been planned originally, its emergence was of significant value in terms of a comparison to the first phase and in providing a temporal dimension to my inquiry. Alongside the interviews, the other data collection activities continued as well. Data analysis of the second phase was conducted as the first, thus building a robust body of themes and constructions spanning a five year period.

### **Summary**

My desire to make sense of my unique world required a research methodology that supported my view of reality as socially constructed and subjectively determined, enabling me as researcher and subject to reflexively construct my leadership practice. I adopted a qualitative, postmodern constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) expressed through the narrative of autobiography. Here, texts are usually written in the first person (Ellis & Bochner 2000) which offered a way to situate myself within my research by making the self the object of research (Ellis 2004) whilst allowing me to develop the required reflexivity (Adams 2007; Etherington 2004) in order to account for my leadership practice. My data collection and analysis activities, particularly my interviews with colleagues, became a catalyst for reflecting on my practice. I took a systematic and rigorous approach to the data collection, analysis,

and interpretation about myself and my social world and there is an audit trail to substantiate this. The analysis of data would entail producing a meaningful account of my practice so that my research would make a difference to me and my practice and to those who read it. The value of my story will be judged by the authenticity and validity of the narrative and whether, as Ellis (2004) suggests, ‘can the author make legitimate claims for his story? Did the author learn anything new about himself? Will this story help others cope with or better understand their worlds?’ (p.275). I believe that my research methodology, data collection and analysis have enabled the answers to these questions to be in the affirmative.

The following chapters detail the construction of my leadership practice as I set about my work as head of marketing at Peacocks whilst instigating the changes I felt were necessary and facing the challenges posed by others and sometimes by myself. I draw upon data sourced from my social world and my reflexivity and combined this with the literature and methodological theory to develop three interrelated themes that provided an account of my practice – self, change and leadership.

### Self

#### Introduction

My inquiry was something of a cathartic experience for me, a culmination of many years of observing and experiencing life in its multifarious forms. Having achieved an age that covers over half a century, I have witnessed many changes in my life. I observed that the pace of social change (Gergen 2000) has quickened over the last twenty-five years or so, even more in the last ten years and faster again in the last five years. The story of this social change has been described as a complex and contested one (Adams 2007) and my personal experiences together with my work in fashion retailing led me to agree with Gergen (2000) who stated we have become immersed ever more deeply in the social world and exposed to the opinions, values and lifestyles of others. The technologies of social saturation have propelled us towards a new self-consciousness: the postmodern (Gergen 2000). It is in this context that I undertook my research and set out to create meaning out of experience (Bruner 1990) that would bring a better understanding of my self (Adams 2007) and my leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006).

My autobiographical I method (Smith & Watson 2010 ) allowed me to create (Tierney 1996) something about myself and my practice through a connection to my culture. I was mindful that postmodernism allowed a complete scepticism of human knowledge (Fawcett 1998) where the very concept of self could be rejected on philosophical grounds (Callero 2003). This was too extreme a position for me to take as I considered I had a degree of unity and coherence (McAdams 1997) and I placed myself at the centre of my inquiry as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004), balancing reflexivity (Adams 2007) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) as I sought to find out what others with whom I worked with thought about my leadership. Knowledge of my identity and practice sourced from my culture became critical to my inquiry – beliefs about myself were pivotal to my understandings (Gergen 2000).

I was aware of my subjectivity and there was a temptation for me to ignore, manipulate or interpret data to my benefit, to portray me in a better light to either myself or to others and potentially for falsification. I was an insider (Dwyer & Buckle 2009) in my research and I opened myself to others for comment and criticism on my leadership practice. This became a gateway for comments regarding my practice and of a more personal nature that were potentially more sensitive. I listened to the views of others and placed them in the context of other knowledge I had. Although their truths may not become my truths, by this process the 'me' was placed with the 'I' (Mead 1934; Prus 1996), where my socially constructed self took into account the generalised others (Cerulo 1997), habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and a changing social world (Jordan 2002). My resulting narrative of self-identity may be 'neither authentic nor ideological but an unstable mixture of fact and fabrication' (McNay 2000 p.94). It represented *my* understanding of *my* self in *my* social world.

I used the terms self and identity interchangeably (Adams 2007) and adopted a definition of self that included all my components, my identity, my internal source of identity and anything else such as instincts (Adams 2007). The research interviews with colleagues produced thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) that revealed much about myself within my leadership practice as well as something of who I was as a person. My colleagues had observed and commented how my personality (James 1975) manifested itself in my practice. Some of these characteristics were referred to in the literature as being the characteristics of a leader and I thus connected my identity to leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). I noticed during my data collection and analysis stages that many of the views of my social world (McNay 2000) ran in parallel with my reflexivity (Adams 2007) prompting my thoughts, memories and schemas (George & Jones 2001) of my life so far and how these have contributed to my identity.

When I thought about my identity and who I was, a mixed picture emerged. I had positive images and negative images, good and bad memories and strengths and weaknesses. Ever since my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993), I have felt different to others through personal circumstances and events. This feeling of individuality (Gergen 2000) lingered into my adult life although it was heavily countered by a

relational worldview (Gergen 2000) that emphasised the social construction (Mead 1934) of my identity. In a work context, the concept of leadership itself was a social phenomenon (Hollander 1993) and relational (Grint 2000). The context of work is a crucial domain for the development of identity (Hogg & Terry 2000). My identity therefore became connected to leadership through my social world (McNay 2000), a world that provided the context for the construction of my practice.

I was not looking to invent myself (Rose 1998) rather to validate and reaffirm the person that I was as I faced the challenges and risks posed by my social world (McNay 2000) and potentially my own myopia. The idea of validating and reinforcing one's sense of self is in the context of a more uncertain social world, often in the face of incalculable and unlimited risks, a position that is reflective of the postmodern age (Beck 1994, Giddens 1992). I was unaware of some aspects of my identity and I hoped that my research would enable me to create (Bruner 1990) and understand the construction of myself in the context of my leadership practice. At one point I thought it may be possible to understand a true and knowledgeable self (Gergen 2000), but this would appear to have been diluted by social saturation and truths being relativised by the multiple voices influencing me (Gergen 2000). I realised then that each truth was a construction of the moment, for only a given time.

The theoretical framework upon which my analysis of self is positioned is one that I constructed from several theories. In the conceptual framework presented in chapter two, I critically discussed several approaches to selfhood based on social constructionism (Mead 1934; Elliot 2008; Goffman 1959), reflexivity (Adams 2007; Callero 2003; Giddens 1992), power (Callero 2003) postmodernism (Gergen 2000; Adams 2007; Casey 1995) and psychoanalytic concepts (Freud 1900; Kets de Vries 1993). I found it difficult to focus on one theory because there are aspects of each that I considered were appropriate to my analysis. I adopted a bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln 1994) approach and combined aspects of each theory. I was also aware of the hybridised versions of reflexivity and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and I was cognisant of the value of these perspectives as I analysed my data. I considered that the external world of the individual, expressed through social construction (Mead 1934) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and the internal world expressed through reflexivity (Adams 2007) and psychoanalytic (Freud 1900) concepts had a role to play

in the construction of my selfhood. This approach is akin to a version of self-identity that includes reflexivity and the social, as well as the role of the unconscious, the irrational, the emotional and self-ambiguity as culturally refracted (Adams 2003). Coming to understand self is a relational exercise where there are a number of perspectives and as a research method is congruent with the idea of identity formation as one of progressive repositionings of the self along a myriad of lines of identity (Austin 2005).

The words “know thyself” were attributed to Socrates and inscribed on the Temple of Delphi over 2000 years ago. It is a concept that I found apposite to my inquiry as I began to work with my data and I wondered would I ever truly “know myself”. I anticipated this study would at least begin that journey. As an insider (Maydell 2010) in my research, I was able to access myself through interviews with cultural members (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). Data was produced that described how my identity characteristics were evident in my attitudes, values and behaviours within my leadership practice. Interview participants spoke about my identity (Adams 2007) in an unprompted way, referring to where I was born, my characteristics and even commented on my physical appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995). I was surprised at times about how willing my colleagues were to talk about aspects of myself that were quite personal to me, something I assumed they felt comfortable doing and this ‘self-other’ talk was a discursive source that was an ingredient in my identity formation (Ybema *et al* 2009). Perhaps these comments were elicited in response to my insider (Maydell 2010) position in the research and I was known to the research participants having worked together for a number of years. The depth of meaning I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) from participants comments resonated with how language (Mead 1934; Foucault 1977; Fairhurst 2009; Adams 2003) is at the heart of the constitution of the self (Elliot 2008).

The analysis of self began my inquiry and represented my position at the centre of the research as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004) and as an autobiographer (Smith & Watson 2010), drawing in data from my social world (McNay 2000) and reflexively constructing my identity in the context of my leadership practice. This set the foundation from where the themes of change and leadership were developed in subsequent chapters.



Self is one of the themes in my inquiry. The conceptual framework presented in chapter two described the interrelatedness of self with the remaining two themes of change and leadership. The relationship between the themes is shown in Figure 10 with an emphasis on self as related to this chapter

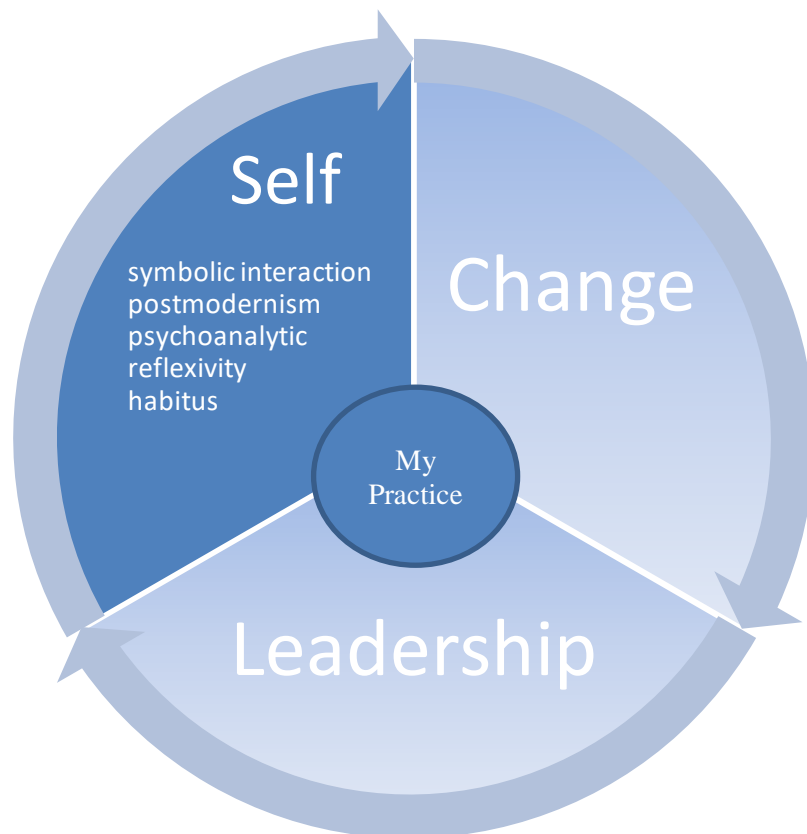


Figure 10: Conceptual Framework Focussing on Self

Source: The Author

My position as researcher and subject (Ellis 2004) allowed me to access my social world (McNay 2000) and reflexivity (Adams 2007) to identify six constructions that described the role of identity within my leadership practice (Figure 11):

<b>Research Constructions</b>	<b>Indicative Conceptual Framework</b>
My Self in a Postmodern World	Adams 2003, 2006, 2007; Casey 1995; Mead 1934; McNay 2000; Callero 2003; Gergen 2000; Cerulo 1997
The Influence of My Early Years	Kets de Vries 1993; Bourdieu 1977; Casey 1995; Callero 2003; Mead 1934; Atwater & Yamrino 1992
Personal Characteristics	Goffman 1959; Bourdieu 1977; Gergen 2000; Gecas 1982; Elliot 2008; Adams 2006; Bion 1970; Kets de Vries 1993
My Behaviours at Work	Hirschhorn 2000; Obholzer 1996; Bass & Riggio 2006; Bourdieu 1977; Kets de Vries 1993; Freud 1900
My Emotions	Ellis 2008; Goffman 1959; Khaleelee & Woolf 1996; Yukl 1998; Bion 1970; Obholzer 1996
Individuality	Gergen 2000; Adams 2006; Mead 1934; Ellis & Bochner 2003; Bourdieu 1977

Figure 11: Self Constructions & Indicative Conceptual Framework

Source: The Author

Each construction has been analysed by integrating theory, data from habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and reflexivity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007). I believed that my narrative based upon a robust interrogation of theory, method and data and the relationship between all three had the potential to be of use to others and have a wider benefit for leaders in many walks of life and positions.

### **My Self in a Postmodern World**

Although my research was concerned with my leadership practice at work, any discussion of self and identity is inseparable from the social, cultural, relational, discursive fabric in which it is constituted (Adams 2007). I reflected on how much of my life had changed since I joined Peacocks in 1995, straddling a time that saw my age move from thirty-eight to fifty-two, including that so-called ‘mid-life crisis’ phase. I could not ignore the other aspects of my life and those more personal thoughts and moments. I have always tried to keep a strict boundary (Hirschhorn 2000) between my home life and my work, although inevitably there were times when this distinction became blurred and outside events were on my mind when at work or conversely I thought about work when at home. My work self and my home self were different, akin to multiple selves (Casey 1995) where I could potentially have as many

selves as social roles (Mead 1934; Goffman 1959). My identity was fragmented in response to being simultaneously a worker, leader, manager, parent, friend, student and neighbour (Deetz 2003). I found that there were as many selves as there were social roles where I related to different generalised others (Cerulo 1997) at different times (Mead 1934) dependent on where and who I was with.

My wife and I are now in our twenty-eighth year of marriage and I have seen my older two children grow through their teenage years into adulthood (Goldscheider & DaVanzo 1989). Our youngest daughter, born in 1998, gave us a fresh impetus and she demonstrates an energy and talent in so many directions. Another key event in recent years was the death of my mother in 2006, the closest person I had known for the longest time, an event that represented the end of a major chapter in my life. The family (McDaniel & Tepperman 2003) aspect of my life was evident to my colleagues at work, as witnessed through the comment from one of the focus groups (A): “I think he is a very sound family man and tends to balance his life between work and family”. This raised an interesting observation with regard to interview dynamics. Even though I was not present in the focus group where this extract originated, I considered that some form of demand characteristics (de Munter 2005) would be present given this was a social situation (Brenneis 1996) and these may be embodied (Eriksen 2008) by the facilitator in his role (Hirschhorn 2000) as my ‘representative’. Even so, there would be no expectation to discuss ‘family’ in the context of a discussion on my leadership practice. The fact that it did demonstrated that my colleague felt comfortable in commenting upon it in the context of the interview and that I had clearly demonstrated how my family was important to me whilst at work. The comment illustrated the multiplicity of social roles (Deetz 2003; Cerulo 1997) i.e. work and family, within my identity. It was an aspect of my identity at work that was revealed by my culture that I was previously unaware of.

When I reflected on the past and compared ‘then and now’, most aspects of my life have changed with some being more profound than others. These occurred in response to a combination of situations, either decisions I made, events that happened to me or through wider cultural, social or technological changes (Gergen 2000; Adams 2007). These included the erosion of the traditional bonds of social solidarity (Casey 1995) where my life as a boy growing up in the 1960’s in a Yorkshire town now appears to

be so very far away, a different life. It is a changed world that I live in now, one that is complex, plural and uncertain (McNay 2000). The effects of globalisation (Callero 2003) are to be witnessed in everyday life, where I am now in the midst of a more complex, faster moving and uncertain (Beck, Giddens, Lash 1994) world. The erosion of tradition (Tomlinson 1999), a lack of respect and diminishing values in society have resulted in a loss of meaning. There is an endless stream of information, technology and media messages that affect our lives. We are socially saturated (Gergen 2000), wrapped in a world of instant communication, endless talking, often of little or no real value, and a heightened awareness of innumerable potential dangers to our families and ourselves.

New communication formats have extended access to ‘the generalised others’ (Cerulo 1997 p.397). Today’s round the clock global media (Arnett 2002) includes a multitude of constantly changing formats and instant access – an event on one side of the world is instantaneously reported on the other. We hear the voices of human kind (Gergen 2000) incessantly. Nearer to home, my children have the accoutrements deemed necessary by society to live in the modern world – mobiles, pc’s and access to the never-ending communication points, such as texting and social networking sites which seem to take over their lives. Where has the time come from to spend hours on such activities – and now we are tweeting. Are people that interested? It would seem so. I observed that in the last twenty years there has been an erosion of individual independence and an increase on the dependency (Harter 1983) of others, manifested through the unprecedented growth in communications and mass media (Adams 2007).

I am part of this postmodern era and have contributed to it. I think about my job where I am involved with marketing, communication and customers, ‘bombarding’ (Gergen 2000) our society with a never ending intensity of fashion and lifestyle images. I am very much in the midst of a postmodern world. Increasingly, I question the value of many things that I and others do or say. There is much to be applauded within our modern world, but I sense that my scepticism (Schon 1987) increases as I get older. I reflected upon these aspects of my life and compared the past to the present and how my identity had been influenced and changed by the generalised other (Cerulo 1997). Exploring inner feelings and memories is thought provoking and at times an emotional (Fineman 1993) exercise yet I feel that I can begin to have a

better understanding of my behaviour and attitudes. Normal day-to-day life does not usually allow such a deep analysis to be undertaken. My inquiry will help to unearth these perspectives and enable me to begin to construct myself in the context of my leadership practice.

### **The Influence of My Early Years**

I was intrigued with a number of comments that arose in the interviews with colleagues that referred to my personal background. I read these in the transcripts from the focus groups that my colleague facilitated (Smith 2005) and therefore the comments were not made directly to myself. As the same colleagues were also interviewed by myself in one-to-one interviews, I noted that the comments were not repeated. This suggested that there was a boundary in terms of what was said in the groups and then to myself directly. The effect of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996) and power within the focus groups (Hoffman 2007) may explain the variation in some of the comments. As the participants were my direct reports, perhaps they felt uncomfortable in saying the more personal comments to my face or perhaps the context in which they were said may not have arisen in the one-to-one interviews. I can only speculate as I am unaware of the real reasons. In hindsight, there is nothing sensitive in what was said and indeed there were many other comments where my direct reports did not hold back criticisms or potentially sensitive remarks. The value of the comments was to tell the story of my identity (Adams 2007) and my leadership practice from the perspective of my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) to reveal some of the reasons why my attitudes and behaviours were as they were.

Participant 1 “I think he will always struggle with the confrontational aspect because that’s so inbred and born with his character”

Participant 2 “It is yes”

Participant 1 “I don’t think so much – he can have a go and try it but I think deep down he still would find it a problem”

(Focus Group A)

Participant 3 “I think he does lack a certain assertiveness when it comes to dealing with something straight away and it could make him more mindful of when he’s handling situations - but I don’t think you will change him as a person because that’s the way he is”

(Focus Group B)

Participant 1 “There’s something to do with his character - he finds it difficult talking to people”  
(Focus Group A)

Participant 2 “I think that it is obviously inherent in his nature - that he just doesn't feel comfortable doing it, so he doesn't do it”  
(Focus Group A)

The key observation here is that participants made a clear connection of an aspect of my leadership practice to my personal background and childhood (Kets de Vries 1993). The phrases “that’s his background”, “so inbred and born with his character”, “that’s the way he is”, “something to do with his character” and “inherent in his nature” emphasised what appeared to be a core (Callero 2003) part of my identity stretching back to my birth. The context of the comments was in connection to how I responded to confrontation at work and dealing with conflict (Morgan 1997). It is significant that they attributed these behaviours to my birth – “inbred”, “born” – suggesting my identity was influenced by my genetic material (Gioia 2000). It is more likely that these characteristics arose in the process of social experience and activity (Mead 1934). These may be relevant yet a stronger influence will have been from habitus (Bourdieu 1977). Taking the role of others was a way in which the self becomes attuned to the demands and pressures of society - I was peopled with ‘the attitude of others’ (Mead 1934). I learnt how to perceive the world as others did in order to know how to behave appropriately (Cerulo 1997). The participants also stated that I would not be able to change these behaviours, where any attempt to do so would fail due to ‘the way I am’. This suggests that there are some aspects of myself that are more fixed and irreducible (Casey 1995) than others. Perhaps my identity can be located in a rational and unitary self (Callero 2003) after all.

My thoughts went back to my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) to understand why I was so averse to conflict. Perhaps it was because I experienced very little conflict at home as a child and so I tended to ignore conflict in later life, unsure as to how to deal with it. This may be akin to myself being a direct product of existing relations (Adams 2003) where the generalised other (Cerulo 1997) was a source of internal regulation that guided my behaviour.

The value of these comments was in connecting my identity to my practice and the understanding by others of the life-long nature of such characteristics. This perspective was also evident in another comment that referred to my origins:

- Participant 2 “It would be fair to say he’s more concerned with the package than the wrapping. He wants a good product rather than a flashy product”  
Participant 3 “That’s his background, isn’t it?”  
Participant 1 “Yorkshire man”  
Participant 3 “He’s not materialistic at all!”

Participant 1 “He’s not flamboyant like a marketing person should be”  
(Focus Group A)

Here was another connection between my identity (Adams 2007) and my practice at work. It appears that my ‘basic’ approach is explained by my “background” as a “Yorkshire man”. I’m uncertain whether this was meant as a complement or as a disparaging remark, probably the latter given some of the stereotypical images of Yorkshire men that abound. This aside, my colleague’s observations corroborated my belief that being a Yorkshire man was an integral part of my identity, one that emerged in conversations with family (McDaniel & Tepperman 2003) and friends (Feld 1991). This characteristic is espoused through my accent, demonstrating how habitus influenced me to behave in ways that reproduced existing practices (Elder-Vass 2007) that I experienced as a child. Bourdieu explained that our accent is generally neither consciously learned nor consciously considered when we speak, yet it tends to reflect our social origins (Thompson 1992 cited in Elder-Vass 2007). My ‘Yorkshireness’ is represented by my accent, which until I speak is not evident. It is this aspect of myself that demonstrated habitus as an embodied phenomenon that signified amongst other bodily dispositions, a style of speech’ (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Adams 2006). I noted that although my accent as a child was influenced by habitus, in later life and in my present culture, I still retained an accent with its Yorkshire roots. The habitus of my working cultures have had little effect here, an observation that points to an individuality (Gecas 1982) within my identity. This could be why my colleagues commented on this aspect during the research interviews, one that was ostensibly a seemingly trivial aspect of my social behaviour (Goffman 1959).

My colleagues also suggested that I am less materialistic than others in similar professions or with a good salary, a comment that perhaps referred to the general perception that Yorkshire men are ‘careful’ with their money. The final sentence of

the extract was revealing for me. My colleagues clearly expected me to be flamboyant, “like a marketing person should be”, when I was anything but flamboyant. I did not meet their pre-conceived idea of the image (Goffman 1959) of a “marketing person”. I reflected on whether this potentially throw-away comment from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) had implications for my leadership practice and my credibility with my team. Indeed, if this was the view that my culture held of what a marketing person should be, then this would help to explain some of the issues I faced when I joined Peacocks. It felt as if my colleagues expected a casually dressed creative, flamboyant, designer-type. Instead they got a ‘suited and booted’, strategic, customer focused marketer. I think I was expected in meetings to be drawing up new designs and ideas. Over time in response to habitus (Bourdieu 1977) I reduced the emphasis on the former stereotype and my colleagues came to see me as represented in this inquiry where I was able to take up my role (Hirschhorn 2000) in the organisation. In the context of my inquiry, this is a relatively minor point yet it is important for me to be clear on what I am in terms of my work role as this contributes to my self-concept (Gecas 1982).

The context for the next set of extracts can also be located at the beginning of my life and reflected the influence of generalised others (Cerulo 1997) and particularly my parents (Berne 1966) on the social construction (Mead 1934) of my identity. I grouped these under the generic title of values (Senge 1996):

Participant 2 “I would describe Richard as a man of high principles and morally honest and I think he expects others to be morally honest as well”  
(Focus Group A)

“I think you as an individual have very high demands for yourself, you set yourself high standards. So because you set yourself high standards, that’s reflected in the way you perceive other people”  
(Trading Director)

“You are not happy when things seem unfair, if a decision seems to have gone one way when actually the full picture wasn’t looked at. That goes back your basic honesty in situations”  
(Creative Controller)

Participant 1 “He’s a very fair person and gives people a chance to say what they think or try something new”  
(Focus Group B)



“You are very loyal to your people. You’ll defend people - that comes naturally. If people have any big problems, they know that you would look after their interests”  
(Trading Director)

“I think you are trustful. I think that goes two ways, one is that you don’t repeat things that I might say to you in a peak, but also I think it is extremely rare for you to repeat something said in confidence to you”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

Facilitator                      “Do you feel that he generates trust in his team”?  
All Participants              “Yes” (all replied together)  
(Focus Group A)

“A lot of your personality comes out in what you are doing within your workplace; the characteristics of your personality are very open, honest and fun. Because of your personality, we know the types of things we can and we can’t say to you. That’s excellent for the team because people feel comfortable with you”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

I connected the words used by colleagues to what I considered were my personal values (Senge 1996) that were fundamental to my self-concept (Gecas 1982) and capable of being part of my leadership practice. My colleagues had observed my “high principles”, “high standards”, “openness”, “honesty”, “fairness”, “trust” and “fun”. These characteristics reflected some of the personality traits that the literature described as being required for leadership: honesty (Turner & Mavin 2007); fairness (Bass & Riggio 2006) and trust (Kouzes & Posner 1988). One colleague mentioned my “personality” (James 1975) that determined how I displayed specific personal characteristics in my organisation (Keirsey & Bates 1978). The comments were sourced from my team members, peers and directors. Several comments from one-to-one interviews were corroborated with comments from the focus groups i.e. honesty, fairness and trust. As I read and reflected on each comment, an image of my mother and father came to mind, such is the strength of my connection with these words and how I remember their values and behaviours during my childhood (Jenkins 1992):

Extracts from my autobiography regarding my parents:

‘Mum not only ran the home, but also contributed to the income of the house with two part time jobs. It was Mum who dealt out the punishments, but it was also Mum who made those fantastic Yorkshire Puddings, dumplings, stews, desserts and cakes. Despite not moving out of the area, she saw tremendous changes in the town and in her role as a wife and mother. When describing her, words like reliable, caring and willing to help are at the top of the list.

Deep down, Mum was very protective of me. Whether this was because she nearly lost me through a miscarriage, and then later again nearly losing me when I was eleven with meningococcal septicaemia, I can only surmise. Her sense of humour was legendary, her friendships with so many people and her role as the centre of the wider family was symptomatic of her personality – loyal, pragmatic, stable, dependable, traditional’.

‘There is no doubt that my father had a significant impact on my life. His attributes included high standards, working to details, patience, setting clear rules and a very dry sense of humour. On the negative side, he could be slow to react to a situation and his temper, when pushed, could be explosive. I can see a lot of these traits in my behaviours. He was also tolerant and allowed quite a few boundaries to be crossed as I grew older - for instance, allowing me to have long hair and wear strange clothes, which demonstrated his patience and tolerance given his own background’.

‘People are products of experiences they have never relinquished’ (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries 1985 p. xii) was an apt reference here. I felt quite emotional (Fineman 1993) when I associated the comments from my research with my parents (Berne 1966), proud that my colleagues had observed and experienced these aspects in my personality that were influenced by those around me as I grew up. This reflects Bourdieu’s (1977) explanation of the basics of culture being imprinted and encoded in a socialising process which commenced during early childhood (Jenkins 1992). The values (Senge 1996) identified by my culture were embodied (Adams 2006) in me as I enacted and espoused these characteristics at work. On reflection, I felt these values had always formed part of my identity as I moved through school, college and the workplace. The values (Senge 1996) go to the very heart of my self – honesty, high standards, fairness, loyalty and trusting. These socially located comments were observed and reported by my colleagues and dovetailed with my own views and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) of my self-concept (Gecas 1982). I would like to think that these are habitual characteristics and are enacted unthinkingly (Adams 2006). My colleagues did not have to say these comments although my values had been clearly evident in my practice and made an impression on my colleagues. I noted the comment “we know the types of things we can and we can’t say to you” in the context of daily working and I suspected this followed through into the one-to-one interviews where demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005) may well have influenced what was, and was not, said. I wondered if colleagues were trying to ingratiate themselves with me through the research process – perhaps some were. There was no reason for my director to do so and I took his comments at face value. In hindsight, my scepticism (Schon 1987) left me with the thought that there was a

reason for him saying these comments; he himself did not like any conflict and perhaps he had reacted to the demands (de Munter 2005) of the interview.

I observed that other values could have been included, such as integrity or compassion, and the words ethical or moral were absent. That said, I did not consider these to be missing from my identity entirely, but clearly in the context of the unprompted interviews these concepts were not at the forefront of participants minds. I questioned whether I have consistently upheld my values during my life and the answer has to be no. Although there has not been a major breach of my values to the best of my knowledge, I know that at various points in my life I have compromised myself and as a result I have been disappointed and annoyed with myself. My research has heightened my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992) of the importance of values and the need to continually sustain their credibility and relevance.

Reflecting on what was said by colleagues, I detected the seeds of my discontent that became evident to others in my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) regarding my attitudes and behaviours at work. An extract referred to me being “morally honest” which was caveated by saying “he expects others to be morally honest as well”. Similarly, my “high standards” affected how I “perceive other people”. These observations by my colleagues inferred I could be very judgmental of others. I recognised this trait in my behaviour once my research had made it visible to me, one that I had previously ‘conveniently’ ignored. This behaviour explained the context for the following extracts:

Participant 1 “He does tend to portray a slight aloofness which many people might interpret as being on the ‘cold’ side.”  
(Focus Group A)

Participant 2 “I don’t think he suffers fools gladly. As long as you are straight and do your job correctly and are of reasonable intelligence then you will get on fine with Richard”  
(Focus Group A)

The value of the focus groups is evident here as participants revealed perspectives that were not included in the one-to-one interviews. These evaluations contributed to my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992) and my self-concept (Gecas 1982). I

felt slightly dejected that I could appear to be “on the cold side” as I considered myself to be quite a warm hearted, considerate person. This was a situation where my ‘me’ contradicted my ‘I’. Having reflected on this comment from the viewpoint of being an object to myself (Mead 1934) I realised that I can appear cold at times and perhaps I should consider amending this. I also understood the comment referring to ‘fools’ but I had not realised the potential negative connotations of the remainder of the comment where I do not appear to be very understanding of others. This could be connected with the comment regarding being “aloof” and the need to have more empathy with others, an aspect of my behaviour that I should address. My research had illustrated how my behaviours were connected to my identity.

I found the constructions regarding my personal background and values sourced from my social world (McNay 2000) to be significant given that the context of the interviews was an exploration of my practice at work. These comments emphasised the influence of my identity within my leadership. My research method enabled my culture to express their thoughts and I was able to listen and reflect upon them. The interviews were a discursive source that produced ‘self-other’ talk (Ybema *et al* 2009) where a ‘anything goes’ conversation took place. I underestimated the openness and volume of comments regarding the personal aspects of being at work. It felt at times that I had researched my private life rather than my leadership practice. I assumed that the emphasis of the participants’ contributions would concern functional work related issues. Although these were present to a degree, the emphasis of comments concerned aspect of my identity. I considered this was because I was an ‘insider’ (Maydell 2010) in my inquiry and conducting research within my own cultural group who knew me through daily contact over several years and who could relate to me as a person who would welcome their thoughts and feelings. I was also mindful of my position in this context of being the superior of some participants and the influence of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005) in the interviews. I hoped to counteract in some way the demands of myself as the insider through the extensive number of interviews with different colleagues in the organisational hierarchy as well as the focus groups where I was not present.

## **Personal Characteristics**

The next group of extracts encompassed aspects of my personal characteristics and appearance whilst at work as observed and commented upon by my colleagues.

“If I was describing Richard Antrum to other people I would describe him physically as a gentleman who is smartly dressed, who carries himself well”  
(General Manager)

When I heard this comment in the interview and then after as I coded the data, it resonated with my self-concept (Gecas 1982) and summarised how I presented myself at work. It is interesting that comments referring to my appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995) and manner were raised in the context of leadership and illustrated how these aspects of my identity influenced the way in which my culture perceived me. The use of the word “physically” inferred the presence of a genetic (Gioia 2000) factor in my identity. They were a symbol (Mead 1934) that represented the values and standards I considered were appropriate to my position in the organisational hierarchy. The use of the word “gentleman” is interesting. I connected this description to my parents (Berne 1966), where my mother would have been proud of me for being described as such and where my father was a gentleman of the ‘old school’. I also thought this was somewhat of an old-fashioned phrase to use, perhaps because it was said by my colleague who could be described as an ‘older man’. I thought for a moment that the comment sounded as if I was out of place at Peacocks, my anxieties (Gabriel 2000) getting the better of me, a thought I quickly dismissed. My colleagues had observed what might be considered as seemingly trivial aspects of social behaviour. My demeanour was noted, with the control of bodily management (Goffman 1959), as was my choice of clothing, an observation that continued in the following extract:

“You would go into a meeting looking relaxed, in control and well prepared. I think sometimes you force yourself down this road. You wouldn’t go into that meeting dressed in casual clothing because it might create waves. It’s not about being a rebel. Most people would say that you are not a follower but you do conform”  
(Buying Controller)

My colleague used the setting of a meeting to talk about other aspects of my identity. My clothing was a costume (Kivisto & Pittman 2011) from which my colleagues formed an impression of me. Although there were no strict rules on dress code at the time at Peacocks, males generally wore suits and ties, which is how I dressed. In that

sense I was responding to habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). Perhaps there was a degree of managing my self-image and appearance that Lasch (1980) referred to, but not to the extent of narcissism in the context of the corporate world. I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) my colleagues' comment to mean that I was acting in a way that was not natural to me. The phrase "you force yourself down this road" led me to believe that my behaviours were somehow false (Harter 1983) and that I conformed to situations in habitus (Bourdieu 1977) at work where I may not necessarily do so in another context. Wearing casual clothes to a meeting would be seen as being a rebel. This would appear to be a step too far for me, although paradoxically (Fawcett 1998) I gave the impression that I was not a follower (Yukl 1998). Yet I conformed. By deconstructing the research extracts, I observed an inherent contradiction (Denzin 1993) that illustrated the importance of the text (Alvesson & Deetz 1997) in a postmodern inquiry. From these comments, I attempted to ascertain the truth (Richardson 1994), although whichever truth I constructed it seemed to be relativised by a compelling alternative, in this case, the degree to which I conformed. This analysis stream is developed in the following extract that introduces the idea of being conventional:

Participant 1 "Richard is quite conventional really, he's not one to do something to shock"  
Participant 2 "He doesn't like to be called conventional"  
(Focus Group A)

I was seen as conventional by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) although they recognised I would not have described myself in that way. My reflexivity described myself as erring towards being unconventional and at times rebellious in thought, but rarely espoused, whilst respecting the rules and conventions of my culture. My research indicated the differences between my self-concept (Gecas 1982) and how my culture perceived me, where my enacted and espoused attitudes and behaviours as observed by my colleagues were at variance to my own interpretation of my self-concept that was more unconventional. There was further evidence of this in the following extract:

"I think you have an easy manner but I don't think you would let people take advantage of you. I'd say you're bit of a conformist and I wonder whether this is natural to you – does it come naturally? I suppose you do the things that are expected of you. I don't know what you were like as a lad, and how you are really out of work, but I don't think that you would do anything extreme – bit of a steady eddy really"  
(Creative Controller)

My colleague questioned whether my conforming behaviours were natural (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) to me. This observation followed the previous comment “you force yourself down this road”. These both suggested that I did not appear to be completely at ease with my behaviours. There was an element of truth in what was being said, in fact, more than an element of truth. My research unearthed what had been a hidden feeling of mine for a long time. I kept any unconventional feelings hidden from others in order to present a coherent, stable and unified (Gergen 2000) self in my leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) position. There were some social situations such as meetings or discussions where I had to consciously be very aware of my attitudes and behaviours. I found that I could be in a meeting with colleagues where I had to manage my feelings (Fineman 1993), and the next minute I would be in my department with my team and feeling more natural. I experienced a multiplicity of selves (Gergen 2000) dependent on the social situation I was in. I maintained politeness to others because my values (Senge 1996) stipulated that was how I believed a leader should behave. Perhaps I should have let my true (Gergen 2000) feelings be known on one or two occasions. There is little doubt that at times I have put on an act, a dramaturgical performance (Goffman 1959). These occasions have clearly conflicted with my more natural behaviours, as witnessed by my colleagues in the research data.

There were other clues to my identity in this extract that tallied with other comments. I was described as “a conformist”, “steady”, “not do anything extreme” and that I “do the things that are expected of you (me)”. These constructions reflected my self-concept (Gecas 1982). There was another reference to my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) – “what you were like as a lad” and the final phrase “how you are really” signalled my suspicious reflexivity and doubts (Rose 1998) over my true identity. I reflected on whether it would ever be possible to construct my true identity in the realisation that any construction was only true for a given time and within certain relationships (Gergen 2000). This temporal and temporary nature of identity is located in a socially saturated postmodern world that questions the possibility of defining a true and knowledgeable self (Gergen 2000).

One of the features of contemporary selfhood that contributed to the difficulty in establishing identity is self-image and appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995). The

subject of 'image' arose in two extracts that continued this questioning aspect of my identity construction and suggested a form of dual identity:

Participant 3 "He will often join in jokes and enjoys a laugh. He tends to react to others jokes and to situations. Being a marketing man, I suspect that is part of the image he wishes to present to everybody else"

(Focus Group A)

Participant 1 "Do you think he's packaged himself in a way to present this image?"

Participant 2 "It's difficult to say - we've always known Richard"

Participant 1 "It's almost as if he's saying, we're saying - would the real Richard Antrum please stand up!"

(Focus Group A)

I agreed that my humour was more spontaneous as a reaction to something else that is happening or is said, rather than standing up and telling a joke. I was too introverted (Eysenck 1947) for that to happen. My colleagues raised the point concerning "part of the image" (Goffman 1959) I wished to present and the way I have "packaged" myself. The use of language (Elliot 2008) is intriguing here because the words and phrases used are derived from the marketing (Kotler 2009) profession of which I was a 'member' in the sense that marketing had been my career for thirty years. I was struck by the power of these words as I was not aware that I behaved in this way. My culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) stimulated reflexive thoughts that hitherto had not occurred to me. I was attempting to be the perfect professional but in doing so revealed my inability to convey this in a natural manner. This unnaturalness can be observed in several areas. My anxieties in not wanting to say or do the wrong things can be traced back to my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993). I kept my emotions (Gabriel 1999) in control even when I experienced unfairness, a contravention of one of my values. I have always been self-conscious and aware of my own high expectations. I compromised my internal thoughts and feelings on many occasions because I did not want others to think negatively about me. It now appears that paradoxically these behaviours have led others to observe unnaturalness in aspects of my practice, the very thing that I was trying to avoid. The thought of setting out purposely to "package" myself in a way to present an image, as if I was a product or service, was an anathema to me. I accepted that this was how my colleagues had interpreted my behaviours and that a question arose as to my true identity (Gergen 2000), reflected in the phrase "will the real Richard Antrum please stand up". When I



first read this comment in the focus group transcript I was very surprised. This was not said directly to me in a one-to-one meeting and I realised that if the focus groups had not taken place, I would have been unaware of this incisive comment from my social world (McNay 2000). My research method had unearthed a vital perception from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998). The comment suggested a multiplicity of roles (Goffman 1959) and that I was in some way an agent putting on a performance that was essential to my work identity and all that went with it, such as respect and trust (Elliot 2008). Further meaning can be attributed to the phrase “as if he’s saying, we’re saying”. I interpreted this to mean that my colleagues believed I was aware of these ‘unnatural’ behaviours and was looking for a way to acknowledge this to myself and others and potentially even change in the future. In the end, it was my inquiry and the research interviews that prompted my realisation of this behaviour within my identity and flushed out my own concealed thoughts so that I could begin to reconcile my internal feelings in responses to my social world (McNay 2000) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006).

A final construction concerning the personally oriented aspects of my identity was “calmness”, evident in two interview extracts:

Participant 3 “Richard always gives off a temperament of calmness”  
(Focus Group B)

“You always project this calm authority, in control of the situation and I would think that even if everything behind you was collapsing in ruins you would still present the image of total control”  
(Trading Director)

Both my parents (Berne 1966) were generally calm people and tended not to make dramas out of situations and I felt there was a strong influence here. Calmness is a trait of an introvert (Eysenck 1947) and emotionally stable person and I considered that I follow those behaviours. It was interesting to hear my colleagues talk about an external calmness because on many occasions I did not feel calm as a result of something I may have done or a colleague. I contained (Bion 1970) such feelings and entered a ‘cooling’ period where my internal annoyance turned to trying to resolve the issue. This internal control was manifested as “calm authority” as I strove to present a professional approach. This may be interpreted as an act (Goffman 1959) and given

my colleagues' comments regarding my 'true' identity I recognised this observation in my practice. My controlled feelings and calmness were a reflection of how I believed a leader (Bass & Riggio 2006) should behave when emotions (Fineman 1993) are present. I reflected on how my father would have behaved had he been in my position in various circumstances and in an instant I knew the reason for this trait. The influence of my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) and particularly my father remains with me today.

I am generally a quiet person, an aspect of my behaviour that my directors have criticised me for in terms of not contributing as much as they considered I should in meetings:

“You are a bit quiet. I think you are reluctant to discuss areas where you do not have any expertise.”  
(Chief Executive)

I agree with the comment regarding being “a bit quiet”, a trait that reflected childhood habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and my introverted (Eysenck 1947) personality. I preferred to express my leadership in ‘quiet forms’ (Badaracco 2002). I was also respectful of other colleagues’ roles (Hirschhorn 2000) and professional knowledge (Schon 1987) and tended not to say too much where I did not have the level of expertise. I did not want to indulge in speaking for the sake of speaking, a politically (Allen *et al* 1979) motivated behaviour I witnessed countless times as senior colleagues tried to catch another colleague out or attempted to appear clever in front of their senior managers. In saying that, I know I have done this, actions that I am not proud of in retrospect.

### **My Behaviours at Work**

During my analysis of the data, I detected a change of tone that moved comments from an emphasis on the personal aspects of my identity to those that emphasised my self in my practice, the way I went about my day in and around the office and with my colleagues, in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). These behaviours are clearly rooted in my identity which explained many of the espoused and enacted aspects of my work that are discussed in this and subsequent chapters concerning the themes of change (Kotter 1996) and leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006).

“When you joined, there was a total feeling that we knew we could rely on you; you showed on a lot of occasions when we actually had problems, we found that you were very supportive, you actually helped us, not by taking the problem and dealing with it yourself, but gave us advice - "why don't you approach it like this”

(Marketing Manager 2)

“I think you are good to come and talk to. People can bounce things off you, you will listen. I think you are extremely confidential. I think somebody can come in and talk to you in the knowledge that it would simply not go around, so people trust you”

(General Manager)

“If I ever wanted to come in and speak to you and say – Richard, I want half an hour to talk to you, you would give it to me and listen. If I had a real problem you would listen and try and solve it. I know that and I know that for everybody”

(Marketing Manager 1)

“I think you always score because you take your time, you won't be rushed, think it through and give a considered reply. And if you don't want to give a reply, you say you'll come back - I think that's quite a skill” (Marketing Manager 1)

“If I was to say what else you are good at, its doing things - I know if I give you a job or you're empowering your team to do a job I know it gets done. And that's again really important - you may not always do it immediately, but it always comes up. I think for you, 'reliable' is a very good description”

(Chief Executive)

I found certain aspects of my identity lent themselves to building relationships with colleagues in my department and on a wider level in the organisation. These became important elements of my practice as I performed my role (Hirschhorn 2000) and in a sense contributed more to my identity and self-concept (Gecas 1982) than the specific position of head of marketing and the functional activities that were undertaken. These were meaningful constructions that contributed to my understanding of my identity. The descriptions used by my culture in the above extracts included being “reliable”, “supportive”, “giving advice”, “confidential”, “considered”, “practical”, “listening”, “trusting” and “solving problems”, characteristics that the literature described as leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). These represented my identity and facilitated my leadership position. These were positive characteristics that were said directly to me in one-to-one interviews and by members of my team and a peer colleague. I had no reason to doubt their validity in the sense of whether the participants were trying to be nice to me, although the ever present

question of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005) was a consideration to bear in mind. These comments from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) indicated the values to which I would like to consistently adhere to - respect, trusting, listening and empathy. I am sure that despite the positive tone of my colleagues comments, I have fallen short of these standards at times. There were other extracts in my data that led me to think about my weaknesses, a reaction that ran parallel when reflecting on my strengths. I recognised this trait in my leadership practice where my depressive position (Obholzer 1996) acknowledged my contribution when things went wrong rather than blaming others. This capacity is based on early experiences and their later reworking as the life-cycle progresses (Obholzer 1996).

The next set of interview extracts revealed how my views manifested themselves and how I reacted when challenged by others:

Participant 3 “I think he has very clear focused views on what he wants to do and although he acts balanced and listens to other people’s opinions, I think at the end of the day he has a very high belief in his own ideas”  
(Focus Group A)

“I think you can be often quite single minded. And I think that is a strength, but it can be a weakness. For example, with the budget, you tend to say 'there's no budget for that and I know that if you're not controlling the budget then suddenly it would be way over and then you are challenged for over-spending, but you seem almost pre-occupied with it, whereas maybe you could be more flexible with it”  
(Trading Director)

Participant 3 “In relation to fighting for things for his department, people have said he could be stubborn. I am told he had an eye-to-eye, confrontation with the Chief Executive over the budget last year”  
(Focus Group A)

The research had unveiled a contradictory (Graetz & Smith 2010) aspect of my identity evident in my practice. Although I am seen to have “focused views” and “a very high belief in my ideas”, my strength of “single-mindedness” became a weakness and resulted in behaviour described as “stubborn”, “inflexible” and “confrontational”. At times I do behave in these ways although I noted as I attempt to understand these comments that there was a particular context for such behaviours.

My insider position (Maydell 2010) had made known to me these more critical aspects of my identity. The influence of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005) had in this case produced comments that in content were not expected although the fact that they were said demonstrated that more negative comments were capable of being spoken by research participants. As an insider (Bochner 2004; Anderson 2006) I heard these comments first-hand which helped my understanding. My identity was a factor in enabling such comments to be made and this was commented upon by a participant in an extract I included earlier - “we know the types of things we can and we can’t say to you”. Such comments helped me to probe deeper into the reasons for these aspects of my practice.

In the situations involving the extracts above, the issue concerned the concept of fairness which was one of my closely held personal values (Senge 1996). The functional example quoted in the extract involved my responsibility for the marketing budget and the difficulty I had controlling it given the many demands from numerous directions around the organisation. My line director had asked me to be more flexible with the budget. That was fine for him to say that, but as he intimated himself, I would be challenged for any overspends. Many activities were initiated to drive sales by others in positions of power which invariably did not work and left an invoice for marketing materials to be paid which over the year added up to a significant amount. Hence my phrase “there is no budget for that” which reflected my position power (Yukl 1998) although it was overridden by the directors given their authority (Obholzer 1994) in the organisation. In a similar context, the comment with regard to the confrontation with the chief executive was a little dramatic a description, but here I was told to reduce my budget to contribute to savings, yet the trading requirements meant that in effect an increase in budget was required. To reduce the budget at that time was merely a paper exercise and I viewed this as unrealistic and unfair. I believed that I was right to “fight for things for his (my) department”, even if that meant retaining the existing budget level. Whatever my reasons were for behaving in these ways and no matter how much I justified and rationalised my attitudes, the research the extracts pointed to aspects of my identity that were visible to culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) where I revealed some emotions (Fineman 1993) that were part of my identity.

In contrast to my supposed “single-mindedness”, several interview extracts pointed to an aspect of my behaviour that suggested I compromised some of my “focused views” when faced with the reaction of my directors, those in positions of higher authority (Obholzer 1994) in the organisational hierarchy:

Participant 2 “He’s keen to be accepted isn't he, he’s keen to be liked by those above him and hence if his overall strategic opinions differ then he will fall in line, he won't sort of stick to his principles which in some ways you have to do in that sort of position”  
(Focus Group A)

“You tend to back off if your boss thinks different whereas I can tell sometimes you are thinking the opposite – I wish you would be more challenging to your boss sometimes”  
(Chief Executive)

“I think that your behaviour with the directors is that you certainly show an awful lot of respect to them, in terms of their position, but it's whether or not you hold the respect in private as to the decisions they make”  
(General Manager)

My data made visible an aspect of my behaviour that I had been apprehensive in acknowledging for some time. I knew that under my external veneer of identity characteristics there was an issue in terms of how I responded to those in authority (Obholzer 1994). It was clear that this was a visible feature of my practice. The comments from different perspectives of my social world (McNay 2000) – my team via the focus group and my peer and chief executive – illustrated a view that I lacked the assertiveness to challenge or argue my case with those in authority. I was confused. I accepted that this characteristic was part of my identity, yet I reflexively recounted the many occasions where I had influenced, argued for, pushed, nagged and at times just done what I considered was the correct action to take. I do not think that I would have worked for Peacocks for long had I not done these things. Yet it was evident that this was not the case consistently and it was in the third extract that I began to understand why. The phrase “you certainly show an awful lot of respect” provided meaning (Bruner 1990) when I reflected on why I behaved this way. This behaviour was constructed in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) in childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) where my parents embodied authority and expected respect from me and where they in turn showed respect to others, particularly my mother who was almost deferential at times with authority (Obholzer 1994) figures such as doctors or

teachers. In a contradictory (Graetz & Smith 2010) interpretation, the trait of respect from my childhood was not apparent in all cases as evidence by the extract “but it's whether or not you hold the respect in private”. This revealed how my embodied (Adams 2006) values were expressed at times and my performance (Goffman 1959) became transparent. I had revealed aspects of my true self (Gergen 2000) in the context of the organisational culture where I considered some of the directors' behaviours were contrary to the values (Senge 1996) we had discussed and agreed as a senior management group. Although I showed respect, it was in a begrudging manner. The reasons for my reluctance to challenge can be ascribed to my reluctance in contravening my inculcated respect for those in authority, a fear of not being liked that could lead to anxieties and a lack of confidence and an avoidance of conflict that challenging authority may lead to.

The analysis of the observation regarding ‘handling conflict’ is developed further:

Participant 2 “One criticism is that he doesn't like confrontation. Within the department, there have been certain things that have gone on for months and it's never been tackled - he avoids it. And inter-department as well. I think that it is obviously inherent in his nature - that he just doesn't feel comfortable doing it, so he doesn't do it”

(Focus Group A)

I acknowledge that I did not like confrontation and I tended to avoid it. In the extract, the phrase “inherent in his nature” is a reason given for this trait. I attributed my dislike of confrontation to my “nature” as a result of habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) as a child where conflict was virtually non-existent or certainly suppressed and hidden from my view.

There were further implications of these behaviours to consider. My leadership practice had become potentially compromised as implied in an extract from a focus group “he won't sort of stick to his principles which in some ways you have to do in that sort of position”. I reflected that the aspects of my identity concerning contravention of values, wanting to be liked and avoiding conflict were difficult issues for me and not conducive to a leadership position. My inquiry had revealed how my childhood habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and the culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) of my work had constructed (Mead 1934; Callero 2003) my identity and in turn influenced my leadership practice to the extent that these aspects became visible to

my colleagues. My practice was further compounded at times by my laissez-faire leadership style (Bass & Riggio 2006) and my “calmness”, all combining to potentially undermine my leadership.

My data in these contexts had prompted ‘meta thinking’ (Boyd & Fales 1983) that helped me to become more aware of myself (Kemmis 1985) concerning issues that previously had not surfaced or I had ignored and that a change concerning my self (Quinn *et al* 2000) should be considered. I had not wanted to confront my own issues and had avoided my own conflicts. My insider position (Ellis & Bochner 2004; Anderson 2006) had at least facilitated these issues.

As my analysis developed, I made a connection to my formative years where my inner patterning was largely the outcome of my early childhood conditioning (Kets de Vries 1993) and my subsequent life experiences based upon that conditioning. I had not been fully aware of the depth of influences of my childhood on the construction of my identity, a reflection that I wrote about in my personal journal:

‘I can begin to understand how my attitudes and behaviours have been shaped. Underpinning these are certain drivers which influence my actions – a need to prove myself (and not to experience failure, which is how I perceived my fathers career when I was a child); to be constantly planning ahead and attempting to think through every possible scenario (in order to achieve and therefore please others in authority positions and obtain their approval, which I probably did as a child); to be always ‘doing things’, putting things in order (as I tidied my mother’s sideboard as a very young boy and helped my father around the house). Growing up, there was very little conflict in our family; what was there was dealt with quietly, without fuss, or probably even suppressed or hidden. I also saw the importance of the family and my role within it (togetherness as well as independence, reliability) and listening (as I did with my father as he chatted with me in the evenings as a young teenager). I also drew upon determination, and at times, survival (as I did when I was ill with meningitis)’  
(Personal Journal)

The research data and reflexivity emphasised the importance of my early childhood (Jenks 2005) experiences in understanding my adult personality (Freud 1900) and there are several observations to make here. First, with regard to my aversion to conflict, I may have found one of the development stages of individuals too difficult and conflict too traumatic, resulting in a ‘fixation’ where the problems associated with that stage have been relived in later life (Freud 1900). This is where my avoidance of conflict had its origins. Second, the relationship between myself and my mother may



be another factor, with the idea of me wanting to please and be liked by my mother who influenced my later attitudes towards, and expectations of, other people (Freud 1900). Third, personality development is characterised by an internal struggle between the three personality structures – the id, ego and superego. Freud (1900) believed that we are constantly in a state of conflict between the id and the superego and the wishes of the individual against the demands of the environment. I felt that the instinctive force of my id is dominated by my superego's conscience. This determined how I should behave rather than how I could or want to behave. This conforming perspective appears to drive down the role of the id in my personality, so much so that the comment by my social world (McNay 2000) "will the real Richard Antrum please stand up" appears to suggest that I do not reveal my true self (Gergen 2000) or at least my behaviours are tailored to conform to habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). This observation appeared to be contradictory (Graetz & Smith 2010) to the comment that referred to me as "not a follower". The observation of the differences in my behaviours that led my colleague to suggest there was a "real" me implied there was a tension between my individual emotions and the need for social control and cultural order (Elliot 2008). This reflection is significant given it emanated from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998).

I considered that my father was a role model (Bennis & Nanus 1985) who had very demanding standards and I continued this trait into my work, reference the earlier comment "you set yourself high standards, that's reflected in the way you perceive other people". My father was also the authority (Obholzer 1994) figure at home and although I respected and loved him, I was not close to him. I was aware that I showed respect for my superiors and wished for a strong relationship with them. I wondered if I had looked for a father-like figure to fill the perceived gap that existed between my father and myself. This could also possibly my need to be liked, a response to pleasing my parents.

My inquiry has made me aware of these perspectives through my reflexivity, my culture and the research method and the analysis has provoked deep thoughts that uncovered seemingly reasonable reasons for explaining aspects of my behaviours at work. My early childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) experiences continued into my adolescence (Furstenberg 2000) and early adulthood (Goldscheider & DaVanzo 1989)

and widened the scope of habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) so that my identity became constructed by fragmentary occurrences across temporal boundaries (Gergen & Gergen 1986).

### **My Emotions**

I considered myself to be quite an emotional person although these were primarily internal emotions and were rarely displayed in social contexts. Emotions (Fineman 1993) were a factor in the construction of my identity alongside desires, wishes and impulses from my inner world (Ellis 2008). This perspective also balanced the cognitive emphasis of the social construction approach to identity (Ellis 2008). Research data contained extracts that prompted my reflexivity and I began to understand the extent to which my emotions (Fineman 1993) were evident in my identity and their effect on my leadership practice.

“And I’m sure that you get wound up or pissed off at times but it never seems to come out, so you’re probably good at managing your feelings”  
(Creative Controller)

Participant 1 “I think that Richard maintains a calm exterior which can hide many of his feelings – this shows he can control his feelings, even though we know that he is not happy at times – like when the advertising was criticised by the Chief Executive. I know how Richard felt then, because everybody had seen it before it was finally approved – but that shows how people can change here”

(Focus Group A)

I have experienced a wide range of emotions during my time at Peacocks, many of which I have controlled internally in order to preserve my self-respect and standards to myself and colleagues. Interview extracts referred to “good at managing feelings” and “he can control his feelings” that masked underlying emotions that I experienced. From happiness to disappointment, achievement to frustration and safety to fear, the emotional tide has ebbed and flowed over the years. I controlled and at times suppressed my emotions in order to behave in a manner that I believed was appropriate for a leader (Bass & Riggio 2006). Sometimes this felt quite natural (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) whilst other times difficult to control what I said and how I reacted to situations through the use of language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) and bodily movements and the ‘putting on a performance’ (Goffman 1959). At times I have a calm exterior and an ‘angry’ interior containing my real feelings. Perhaps I am wrong

to take a controlling approach and I should be more expressive with my feelings. There is a tension between my desires and wishes of how I would like to behave on one hand and the requirements for social control and cultural order on the other (Elliot 2008). I see this being traced back to my childhood influences (Freud 1900) and parental relationships where emotions were not in evidence. I had a feeling that my childhood was emotionless although subsequently realised that this would not have been the case and that habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) had inculcated me with the conditioning that followed my social environment (Elder-Vass 2007).

Reflexively I considered that being calm can be a good trait but sometimes emotions need to be expressed. My colleague in a focus group referred to the occasion when I was criticised by the chief executive for an advertising campaign. I felt unfairly treated because all parties had approved the creative and media plan beforehand, including the chief executive, who was particularly happy with what had been proposed. I was naturally disappointed that the advertising had not been reflected in the sales. The sales forecast had been overestimated by the directors and expectations were unrealistically high. With the chief executive criticising the campaign I was in the spotlight as head of marketing. I was annoyed in the way that I was forced to shoulder the blame and I had to control my reactions in the meeting because my value of 'fairness' had been seriously questioned. Of course, others sycophantically followed the chief executive in their criticisms. I felt embarrassed in front of my colleagues and particularly members of my own team. I was somewhat pleased when I later read that my colleague added the comment in the interview "that shows how people can change here" as it was understood how certain individuals had behaved and I had been unfairly criticised reflecting 'how things were done around here' (Martin 2002).

I wrote in my personal journal about my emotions after listening to colleagues in interviews regarding my emotions:

"I can react in a number of different ways to situations. I do things that reflect my life influences and my personality. I can be resilient, calm and controlled. I take comments about my work very personally; I can be overly defensive or conversely accepting my blame. I can retreat. I will keep my real feelings to myself through controlling my emotional reactions. My colleagues comment on my ability to remain calm through all types of situations, yet the paradox is that I feel internally a wide

range of emotions in these situations, from confident and positive feelings and actions to more negative thoughts, anger and injustice. I like to please others. The expectations and wishes of my colleagues are projected onto me and my behaviours and actions in situations can be influenced by these projections. There is much anxiety associated with these areas”

(Personal Journal)

The development of my emotions and their influence on my practice had contributed to my identity (Khaleelee & Woolf 1996) along with defence mechanisms in response to my life experiences. These determined my resilience and ability to live with uncertainty, a feature that is indicative of a person’s capacity to exercise leadership (Khaleelee & Woolf 1996). I am naïve at times. I listen to what people say and take up their cause. A decision is made on the spur of the moment as colleagues projected (Klein 1959) their thoughts onto me. I became the container (Bion 1970) for their feelings and wishes. I found it difficult to say “no” to requests from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) for assistance because of my desire to please people. I often found that my emotions were stirred by a colleague when they explained a situation to me. I wanted to help to resolve it hence the extract from an interview with a marketing manager – “if I had a real problem you would listen and try and solve it”. This was contradictory (Gergen 2000) to my empowering (Yukl 1998; Bass & Riggio 2006) leadership style, but I found it difficult to refuse a face-to-face request.

A contributory aspect to my emotions and anxiety lay with the leadership act of taking responsibility for actions and decisions (Bass & Riggio 2006). Research interviews revealed how I controlled my emotions and this was in part a response to the anxiety I felt and a desire to ensure events went to plan and decisions were correctly made. I did not like making mistakes or my team making mistakes and when this happened I looked to myself first rather than others for the cause. I tended to find fault with myself before others. This is akin to the depressive position (Obholzer 1996) where I acknowledged my contribution towards the problem rather than the paranoid/schizoid position that blamed others. This capacity to maintain a relatively mature stance is based on early experiences and their later reworking as the life-cycle progresses (Obholzer 1996). The containing (Bion 1970) of my emotions, anxieties and disturbances in my authority-cum-leadership role suggested I had been contained in my own development and that I identified with my ‘container’, whom I assumed were my parents, and by a process of introjective identification made the process a part of

my inner life. I considered that this experience was borne out in my capacity to listen as a leader (Bass 1990a), to take in and to react in response to a situation. This is where the emphasis of the container/contained process lay (Obholzer 1996) and came to acknowledge that these psychoanalytic perspectives had contributed to the construction of my identity.

I became aware through my research that my anxieties heightened in response to my reflexivity or indeed meta thinking (Boyd & Fales 1983). My desire to avoid mistakes and to please others led to acute internal feelings that played out a multitude of scenarios that in the end became irrelevant as my more balanced approach became dominant. Nevertheless, the ability to reflect in depth has the effect of generating anxiety and a significant degree self-scrutiny (Adams 2007).

I noted similarities in my data to Fromm's (Maccoby 2007) 'marketing personality' type. Extracts from interviews with colleagues and my reflexivity related my identity to some of the criteria and I have noted this in brackets after each characteristic. This personality type can be detached (referring to my "aloofness") and less likely to cement close ties, being motivated by a radar like anxiety (relevant to myself) that permeated everything they do. Because they are so eager to please and to alleviate their anxiety, they excel at selling themselves to others (a performance). Unproductive marketing types lack direction (I have good direction) as well as the ability to commit themselves to people or projects. When productive, marketing types are good at facilitating teams (a strength in my case) and keeping focus on adding value as defined by colleagues and customers (a strength). After I had read the account of this style, I found myself relating to many of the characteristics and considered this model described my behaviours and emotions aptly, an observation I found ironic given the nature of my work and marketing background.

My emotions were displayed to others who observed these with their subjective interpretations and view of the world (Coughlan & Holian 2007). Two interview extracts provided contradictory (Gergen 2000) information regarding mood:

Participant 3 "Richard can be a bit moody at times, but then again I think he's probably thinking about something and that's just him. He's never rude to people and I've never heard him shout at anyone. He can be very passionate about

things, the changes we need to make, customers and how we should treat each other”

(Focus Group B)

“I can honestly say that I don’t ever detect a change in your mood or approach from day to day – I’ve never seen that. From my point of view, the most important thing from my manager is consistency”

(Marketing Manager 2)

One extract referred to me being “a bit moody at times” and the other “I don’t ever detect a change in your mood”. My assumption was that the latter comment inferred my “mood” was an acceptable one as oppose to a ‘bad mood’. I also noted that the source of the more critical extract came from the focus group where I was not present. Perhaps my colleagues here were more open with their comments rather than the more positive face-to-face comment in the one-to-one extract which was said possibly under the influence of interview demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996). The phrase “that’s just him” seemed to infer that if I was thinking about something, then I would withdraw and become focussed on my thoughts. I understood this comment and recognised that I do slip further into my introverted and quieter traits at times. This could have contributed to the impression of laissez-faire leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) that I can at times project. Importantly, when I am moody I am still polite. My passion became expressed when subjects such as change, customers and cultural values became evident. These expressions of my emotions identified by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) through the research method (Cresswell 2009) were located in my identity (Adams 2007) and became a very real part of my leadership practice (Bass & Riggio 2006).

### **Individuality**

One aspect of self that my reflexivity prompted was the notion of individuality (Gecas 1982; Gergen 2000). Unsurprisingly I concluded that research participants had described behaviours and attitudes that were specific to me and these could not be transferred in their entirety to anybody else. I was a unique self and distinguishable from the generalised others (Cerulo 1997). Numerous circumstances and experiences that were solely applicable to myself have shaped my life. Habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and my social worlds (McNay 2000) exposed me to influences that constructed my identity. Ever since my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993), I felt different to others through personal circumstances and events. This feeling of individuality (Gergen

2000) lingered into my adult life although it was heavily countered by a relational worldview (Gergen 2000) that emphasised the social construction (Mead 1934) of my identity with my self peopled with ‘the attitude of others’ (Mead 1934). So although I experienced a sense of individuality as part of my self-concept (Gecas 1982) I recognised that this was in response to the social worlds I had lived through where the ‘me’ contributed to my ‘I’, the unique and individual aspects of my unsocialised self (Mead 1934). I am not separated from my social world and any sense of individuality was subsumed by the postmodern fundamentals of fragmentation, multiplicity and contradiction (Rose 1998).

Nevertheless, I cannot simply put aside aspects of my life that I believe have contributed to my identity. There was a degree of selfing (McAdams 1997) where my inquiry allowed me to reflect on prior notions of individuality that were derived from my social world. I sometimes thought that individuality meant being separate in some way. My inquiry demonstrated that any feelings of individuality were part of the social worlds that I lived in, where the self is at once individuality and generality (Mead 1934). Perhaps the description ‘individuality’ is misleading and does not describe the constructions that I refer to – ‘unique’, ‘distinguishes’ or ‘specific to me’ may describe these factors more appropriately:

‘my unusual surname (Antrum, not Antrim); an older father who rarely spent time with me, a close relationship with my mother, a step brother who was nineteen years older than me, surviving a life threatening illness, being thin as a child, not being allowed to swim because of my asthma, financially poor parents, no car or telephone at home when growing up and no foreign holidays or even domestic holidays that cost money. These were some aspects of my life that I felt were different’

(Personal Journal)

I reflected on how my research had revealed the ways in which my individuality (Gergen 2000) was expressed through my practice. My colleagues referred to my Yorkshire background and my history and early influences were in evidence as I practiced my work. I was the sole senior marketer in the organisation where my professional knowledge (Schon 1987) was practiced. The changes I instigated and implemented at Peacocks and the PhD I researched provided another unique factor to my identity and individuality (Gergen 2000).

I had always considered myself to be different in some way or another in the social worlds I lived in. I considered this feeling was part of my self-concept (Gecas 1982)

and my sense of personal identity. It is probable that my sense of being different from others (Gergen 2000) stemmed from the ways in which other people have treated me, beginning in childhood (Kets de Vries 1993), where habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) engendered a feeling of safety. Perhaps my sense of individuality is a response to maintaining that safety and to repel 'the images and actions of others' (Gergen 2000) that potentially threaten my identity. I could retreat into individuality to protect my self-concept or conversely to contribute to my identity in my social world. Having a *sense* of individuality (Gecas 1982) is balanced with generality (Mead 1934).

The debate regarding individuality has two perspectives. On one hand I agree with theorists who see an increasing individualisation of social life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) and the resultant emergence of identity projects (Giddens 1991) to express their individuality. A vehicle for this self-expression is narrative inspired by reflexivity, where the subject is at the centre of the story and the architect of their self (Byrne 2003). Here I positioned my inquiry and in producing my self-narrative I made my claim to individuality to myself and if relevant, to others. On the other hand, I empathised with the views of Gergen (2000) who stated that postmodernism has resulted in an individualistic worldview being replaced with a relational worldview and that social construction has led to a blurring of the boundaries of the individual. Indeed, the identity of the individual is viewed as fragmented and multiple (Rose 1998) and socially saturated (Gergen 2000). It may be precisely because of this scenario that I am potentially 'swimming in the sea of uncertainty' (Bauman 1993 p.222). I considered I have the security of a buoy - my individuality - even if that is true for only a given moment in time and subject to change. As Giddens (1991) suggests, individualisation is a reflexive biography where whatever a person was or is, thinks and does, constitutes the individuality of the individual.

My feelings of being different in my early years resulted in a lack of confidence and being self-conscious which continued into adolescence and adult life. I later learnt to adapt some of these feelings by altering my attitudes and behaviours in social situations, yet the feeling of being different still remained. Often my internal feelings contrasted with my espoused behaviours, as my colleague noted in his comment "you certainly show an awful lot of respect to them (the directors), in terms of their position, but it's whether or not you hold the respect in private as to the decisions they



make”. There are chinks in my protective armour that are visible to my colleagues who have observed and reported in the research interviews how I managed and controlled aspects of my individuality, particularly my emotions, that in other circumstances may be espoused or enacted. The demands of habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and the effects of power (Yukl 1998; Kets de Vries 1993) are restrictions on some aspects of my individuality and identity characteristics that make me feel uncomfortable in that social setting and I have to compromise how I react to certain social situations. Paradoxically, this leads to a further sense of individuality as I consider ‘is anyone else feeling this way?’ This change in emphasis is akin to how Schlenker (1985) defined identity as being ‘ones true self which is socially constructed’ compared to one’s ‘situated identity’ that becomes operationalised within particular situations and contexts. In a postmodern sense, the idea of acting and putting on a performance is relevant (Goffman 1959) here and I recognised this aspect in my behaviour at work. In hindsight I was not surprised to read the comment from my colleague: “Will the real Richard Antrum please stand up” and I can put aside feelings of individuality that are located in the past in order to focus on the present and the future.

### **Summary**

My position at the centre of my study as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004) placed me in a unique situation from which I explored and constructed my identity. Creating meaning (Bruner 1990) from my past and present proved to be a challenging but beneficial exercise. I had previously thought about various aspects of my self but in a disparate way and not to the level of detail and integration witnessed in this study. Exploring inner feelings, memories and reflections was a revealing and at times an emotional exercise. I now have a better understanding of my self and how my identity is represented in my leadership practice.

My inquiry connected my self to my culture (Ellis & Bochner 2003) and the research process enabled my identity to be constructed with the analysis embedded in theory and practice (McIlveen 2008). I experienced how vital the research process had been in generating meaningful data and stimulating my reflexivity. I am acutely aware of my subjectivity and biases in how I think and respond to the data and my reflexivity. Indeed, my subjectivity could result in my study being considered no more than a

story, narrative or myth (Prus 1996). The quantity and quality of data given by my culture on myself in a sense reflected my identity as my colleagues provided rich descriptions of my practice. I concluded that being an insider (Maydell 2010) in the research process and having long-standing working relationships with my participants contributed to their willingness to volunteer comments, particularly on the more personal aspects of my identity. I will never know if these were their truths or their views were compromised in some way because of my position in the organisation. In any case, the data I accessed, including my reflexivity, was liable to be subjectively interpreted. The demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996) I may have engendered during the interviews were somewhat diluted through the inclusion of peers and directors in the interviews who may have been less inclined to feel under an obligation to be uncontroversial. Similarly, the focus groups facilitated by my colleague produced in many cases corresponding data without my presence in the interviews.

In some respects, I felt that my life has straddled an old world and a new world and witnessed an altered backdrop against which my identity had been constructed (Cerulo 1997). The social context for my identity had changed from a social world founded on traditional practices and cultural assumptions (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) and a self that was coherent, bounded (Rose 1998) and unified (Gergen 2000) to a postmodern world that is complex, plural and uncertain (McNay 2000) and a self that is fully saturated with a loss of a true and knowledgeable self (Gergen 2000). I considered that my childhood culture was traditional and formal with parents whose own identities had been created in the first half of the twentieth century. I was influenced by habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) as a child and aspects of this early period of my life can be seen in my present leadership practice. As the decades changed and the postmodern world affected the character of social life, my identity became absorbed with the views and values of others, so much so that the very concept of the self in a postmodern world was rejected. In a sense, my identity encapsulated the temporal development of our social world where I considered my identity was a blend of the old and the new, the modern and the postmodern.

Following the constructivist strategy of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), the constructions I interpreted from my research data were as follows: myself in a

postmodern world, my early years and values formation, personal characteristics and appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995). my emotions (Fineman 1993) and individuality (Gergen 2000). As I reflected on my data, there were personal characteristics that I considered were important and many were observed by the research participants. I wrote in my personal journal a summary of how I understood my self-concept (Gecas 1982) to be:

‘straightforward, honest, determined, practical, optimistic, fair-minded, encouraging, a listener, dependable, loyal, trustworthy and humorous; the importance of my family, loyalty to family, friends and colleagues, respect for others, a willingness to change and learn, pragmatic, reliable, sometimes a late developer, a thinker and at times a dreamer, occasionally lacking in confidence and at other times absolutely sure of my actions, sensitive to the needs of others, calm and relaxed, which belies an underlying deep anxiety on many occasions, at times too concerned with what others think about me, a controller of my emotions, sometimes too much, independent but also needing others, a follower of rules when relevant, but rebellious when needed, sometimes having problems with authority figures, concerned if I’m not involved in what’s going on, quiet, private, a listener, slow at times and often idealistic. I have a set of values that I occasionally find hard to live up to myself, let alone expect others to. I can also be too laid back, casual, dreamy, too wrapped in details, anxious, always writing lists of things to do, seeking perfection, happy with my own self, regretful at times about ‘what could have been’, but then instantly double checks to realise that I have so much to be grateful for. So I try and refer back to where I came from, where my roots are, what my parents would think, what I could have been expected to achieve’

(Personal Journal)

My social participation had led to my social construction, an iterative notion that created my identity. I am not a fixed solid entity (Casey 1995), but neither am I totally saturated (Gergen 2000). I did not need to invent myself (Rose 1998), rather to validate and reaffirm the person that I was. Although under postmodernism it may be possible to reject the very concept of the self on philosophical grounds (Callero 2003), I found that for the first time I understood my origins and influences and thereby created my identity. There was a core to my identity that is less susceptible to change, but even this core has been constructed from my social worlds during my life, including my childhood in Yorkshire and the habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) I experienced growing up with my parents. My values (Senge 1996) of honesty, trust and fairness were at the core of my identity, each substantiated by my culture through research data. Surrounding this core were other aspects of identity that were more likely to change temporally given changing circumstances. These included my emotions and internal feelings that I tended to keep hidden from others in order to present a coherent, stable and unified (Gergen 2000) self in my leadership position. I had seen some of my attitudes and behaviours changing as a result of the different and

numerous social worlds I experienced during my life. Indeed, I responded to the changing social world as part of my responsibilities at Peacocks and I became increasingly sceptical of organisational life as I grew older. I could be described as an interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama 1991), changing structure with the nature of the social context. Given my social situation in the working environment, I experienced a multiplicity of self, socially emerged (Mead 1934), where I felt an emotional response to my perceptions of others evaluations of me. I sometimes thought that I was trying to hold on to some of the traditions of the past whilst balancing the diverse and postmodern social construction of reality that I was located in. My reflexivity created thoughts and scenarios that increased my natural anxieties and undermined the very idea of a unified self. I experienced the influence of others that combined with my own characteristics, attitudes and behaviours. These included controlling my anxieties, my sensitivity, occasional lack of confidence, wanting to please others, avoiding confrontation, making the right impression and not wanting to make mistakes. These were based on the views of my culture. So I am being challenged by my changing social world and my reflexivity, leading to a more fragmented, multiple and doubtful scenario with a different voice for different occasions. I recognised my subjectivity and understood that my narrative was for one moment in time and even then could only be viewed as a partial truth. It was from this position that I reflexively considered my identity in terms of my unique aspects, those that differentiated myself from others, ideas that originated in my sense of individuality located in the context of my socially constructed self.

In this chapter, I explored, analysed and constructed my identity in the context of my work at Peacocks. My in-depth contextualised research on my situated practice revealed to me the integral presence and influence of my identity within my leadership. The analysis in the next two chapters continues with an exploration of my change and leadership practices where my identity, values, attitudes and behaviours are in evidence throughout.

# Change

### Introduction

The second theme of my inquiry concerned change (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998; Kotter 1996; By 2005; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Burnes 2004) where my inquiry revealed the significance of change in my leadership practice. In this chapter, I analysed my leadership position in facilitating organisational and self change whilst acknowledging change was an ever present feature of organisational life (Burnes 2004; Kanter, Stein & Jick 1997). Indeed, Peacocks is positioned in a rapidly changing world where the story of social change has been described as complex and contested (Adams 2007). The effects of globalisation (Callero 2003), new communication technologies (Cerulo 1997) and the general shift to a post-traditional society (Adams 2007) have led to a profound change in the character of social life during the twentieth century (Gergen 2000). Postmodernism is set against this backdrop (Gergen 2000) where an emphasis is placed on change and transformation (Chia 1996). These considerations reflected the nature of the business that I worked in, where social changes are represented through changes in fashion and where subjectivity (Rose 1998) and 'no one truth' (Denzin & Lincoln 2000) are evident within the organisation and in the ever-changing needs of customers (Moran & Brightman 2001)

The pace of change is greater than ever before (By 2005). Yet there is limited knowledge about how to plan and implement organisational change (Burke 2008). Scholars and practitioners agree that change processes remain complex and challenging for organisations engaged in such initiatives (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). My narrative provided a lens through which the reader might obtain meaningful personal insights into leading organisational and self change. This may go some way to describing the relationship between change and leadership from a practitioners perspective, one that has seen little integration in the literature (Eisenbach, Watson, Pillia 1999; Bass & Riggio 2006).

My experiences in attempting to lead organisational change illustrated the central relationship between change and leadership. Yukl (1998) declared that leading change is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities and that change is the essence of leadership. However, change theories are often contradictory, lack empirical evidence and are supported by unchallenged hypotheses (By 2005). Change appears to reflect a postmodern (Gergen 2000) philosophy where there may be many views held which are diverse and even contradictory. There is no one method of tackling a particular problem, rather there may be many approaches which are equally valid (Denzin 1993).

The conceptual framework for my inquiry presented in chapter two described the interrelatedness of the concept of change with the remaining two themes of self and leadership. The relationship between the themes is shown in Figure 12 with an emphasis on change as related to this chapter.



Figure 12: Conceptual Framework Focussing on Change

Source: The Author

My narrative allowed me to relate my experiences of change as a practitioner and identified the dominance of the emergent approach to change (Bamford & Forrester 2003) in my practice. I also experienced how organisational change led to change in myself (Quinn *et al* 2000). My position as researcher and subject (Ellis 2004) allowed me to access my social world (McNay 2000) and my reflexivity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007) to identify five constructions that described the role of change within my leadership practice:

<b>Research Constructions</b>	<b>Indicative Conceptual Framework</b>
Change and Identity	Reissner 2010; Sommer & Baumeister 1998; Eriksen 2008; Galpin 1996; George & Jones 2001; Porras & Robertson 1992; Quinn <i>et al</i> 2000; Svenigsson & Alvesson 2003; Adams 2007; Graetz & Smith 2010
Change, Leadership & Management	By 2005; Burnes 2004; Kotter 1996; Yukl 1998; Eriksen 2008; Gill 2003; Luissier & Achua 2004; Adair 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006
Preparing for Change	Lewin 1951; Brown 1999; Eriksen 2008; Yukl 1998; Kotter 1996; Pendlebury, Grouard & Mesto 1998
Organisational Change in Practice	Kotter 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Pendlebury, Grouard & Mesto 1998; Pawson 1994; Burnes 2004; Yukl 1998; Graetz & Smith 2010; Lewin 1951; Eriksen 2008
A Changing Self	Burnes 2004; George & Jones 2001; Galpin 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Bridges 2003; Graetz & Smith 2010; Quinn <i>et al</i> 2000

Figure 13: Change Constructions & Indicative Conceptual Framework

Source: The Author

Each construction has been analysed by integrating theory, data collected from habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and reflexivity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007) I believed that my narrative based upon a robust interrogation of theory, method and data and the relationship between all three had the potential to be of use to others and have a wider benefit for leaders in many walks of life and positions.

### **Change and Identity**

Whilst there has been much organisational energy spent understanding change through technical, economic and operational perspectives, and while this is important, the human element involved in change is a perspective that has hitherto been limited

in extant literature (Galpin 1996). The role of people as the creators and perpetrators of organisations is crucial (George & Jones 2001). First and foremost change is initiated and carried out by individuals in organisations (Porras & Roberson 1992). As part of making sense of change, I engaged in identity work (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) i.e. the ‘forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness’ (Svenigsson & Alvesson 2003) expressed through my inquiry.

As the collection and analysis of my research data unfolded, it became evident that my identity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007) was central to the concept of change (Kotter 1996; By 2005; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Burnes 2004). Interview participants from a range of departments and positions commented on this aspect of my practice and substantiated the validity of the observations. Given the seniority of some of the participants, I felt reassured that these were honest comments as my insider (Maydell 2010) position within my inquiry enabled me to question the truthfulness of the comments as I accessed myself from the position of others. The following extracts referred to aspects of my identity and leadership in the context of change:

“I think you enjoy change, you enjoy bringing it about - you look upon that as a challenge. I think the fact that you've actually created a marketing department from nothing is also an indication that you have the skills of bringing about change”.  
(Trading Director)

“I think you are a person who believes that you have to change to survive. You believe in changing to meet the customer needs. You believe in change and in fresh ideas”  
(General Manager)

“One of your strengths is that you like change, don't you? You can tell. Some do and some don't. The old Peacock's people tend not to like change as much. But I think you like change and you are a champion of change and it helps having worked for other companies. The whole job has been about change since the day you arrived. I can't think of an organisation to be truthful that hasn't changed more than this one”  
(Chief Executive)

My identity had been observed as contributing to my change practice by my social world (McNay 2000). The phrases “you are a person who believes that you have to change to survive”, “you believe in changing to meet the customer needs” and “you enjoy change, you like change, don't you. You can tell” connected my personality to



my attitude and behaviour associated with change. I felt that the concept of change was integral to my identity. The emphasis was on myself as the originator of change and illustrated the human element involved in change (Galpin 1996). The source of change could be attributed to my identity and I reflected on why this may be the case:

‘my propensity for change seems to contrast with my recollections of my childhood which was very stable and distinctly lacking in change, although I was always doing something, keeping busy. Perhaps that explains why in later life I appeared to like change and be driven by a need to constantly move on to some other activity or situation. This may reflect an anxiety, insecurity or even boredom with my current circumstances and activities. Or is this a way of proving myself to others? Past complacency or naivety in a work situation contrasts with a current need to ‘do the right things’. I do not want to get caught out. The result is a continuous flow of change, which could be interpreted as a genuine activity or more sceptically as deflecting attention from weaker areas of my practice’  
(Personal Journal)

Reflexively I considered that change had been a constant feature of my life. I had a sense of naturalness (Graetz & Smith 2010) about change yet I was unsure of the origin of this feeling. My parents were quiet people and there was little that changed in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) during my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993). That at least was my recollection. In contrast to my social world (McNay 2000) I was always doing something, being busy and active. My later experiences of change in the workplace in differing habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) saw a wider set of influences that had deep meanings (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) for me as disappointments and anxieties were mixed with some successes. My schemas built over time guided my perceptions, information processing, sense making, decision making and behaviours (George & Jones 2001). I knew that I did not want to repeat some of my past experiences and mistakes and this encouraged me to instigate change. However, lying just beneath the surface of this approach lay anxieties (Gabriel 2000), emotions (Fineman 1993) and my perfectionist tendencies that required close control (Eysenck cited in Buchanan & Huczynski 1997), a feat I generally achieved and was reflected in my colleagues’ comments of “calmness” and “quiet” as reported in the previous chapter. I also considered a more cynical view that my emphasis on change was a defensive mechanism (French & Vince 1999) to contain my feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and potential threats from others and my own failings.

As I reflected on the data collected from interviews with colleagues in my social world (McNay 2000), it became apparent that there was contradictory (Denzin 1993)

data regarding aspects of my identity and change, an inevitable feature of a postmodern inquiry where there is no one truth (Denzin & Lincoln 2000):

“It’s a bit of a contradiction because he is very flexible with a lot of things and certainly with the change he can either instigate it or he can go with the flow, he can adapt very well but then on the other side of it I think he sees things a bit black and white”

(Focus Group B)

“The only thing which I have heard on a negative side, and I haven't experienced it, is that you can be ‘stuck’. You don't like change forced upon you. It has been said in the past that Richard Antrum can be extremely stubborn and if he doesn't want to give way he wouldn't give way. But then if you look at your underlying characteristics that you don't mind changing things because you have come to a logical conclusion and that is the accepted change then you can understand why you would want to dig your heels in”

(General Manager)

“You enthusiastically promote and accept change most of the time, but I think sometimes if you don't agree with something you’re not as enthusiastic about it, but you’d still make it happen For example, the Home Promotion, it was like we are going to have to put this other one on, but it wasn't enthusiastic in terms of really saying to us this is the right thing to do and we have to do it”

(Marketing Manager 1)

Set against the positive earlier comments, I almost breathed a sigh of relief when I heard and later reflected on more critical aspects of my behaviours concerning change that my social world (McNay 2000) had identified. To reveal these comments was a valuable exercise, particularly as two of the extracts were given in one-to-one interviews and I heard the comments first hand. My colleagues commented that I saw “things a bit black and white”, I can be “stuck” (presumably in my views) and I “don’t like change forced upon” me. If I “don’t agree with something” I can be “not as enthusiastic about it”. On reflection I was not surprised at these comments and I attributed these to aspects of my identity that were analysed in the previous chapter – “you can be often quite single minded” (a comment that was mentioned as a potential weakness) and I “could be stubborn”. I observed that each characteristic had a corresponding opposite comment from my colleagues, for instance, although I was “stubborn” I was also “flexible” and taking a negative view of being “single minded”, this was balanced with a “determination”. It was these characteristics that became evident within the context of change. I was disappointed with the comment that referred to not “liking change being forced upon” me because paradoxically I attempted on many occasions to overcome the resistance (Pawson 1994) of others in

pursuit of the changes I was proposing. Leaders do not have to immediately become the change they seek but they must be working towards aligning their talk and behaviours with their beliefs in an open and honest way (Eriksen 2008). Having been informed by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) of these behaviours, my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992) was enhanced and I attempted to change these aspects of my practice and adopted the approach of ‘becoming the change that I wanted to see’ (Quinn *et al* 2000). This is because at the heart of change are my beliefs, interpretive schemas and behaviours (Porras & Robertson 1992). I was also aware that my resistance (Pawson 1994) could be overcome by other identity characteristics of wanting to please others, avoiding conflict and complying with authority. These were influences from my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) where I took the role of others (Mead 1934) that I recognised in my contemporary practice.

A further contradiction (Denzin 1993) was identified regarding the phrase ‘champion of change’ quoted by the chief executive to describe my change practice and presented in an earlier extract. In an interview with a senior colleague, this proposition was questioned:

“I don't know whether you see yourself strong enough as a change agent?”  
(General Manager 1)

Reflexively I realised that my colleague was questioning my belief in my capability to be a change agent (Bennis & Nanus 1985; Eriksen 2008). Some aspects of my attitudes and/or behaviours with regard to change had clearly prompted this statement from my colleague. The phrase “see yourself strong enough” was a perceptive observation that worried me as I reflexively tried to understand why this had been said. I realised that certain aspects of my identity had already questioned my ability to be the ideal change agent (Eriksen 2008) that perhaps I was trying to be. A lack of confidence at times, avoiding potential conflict and the need to please others had diluted my capacity to influence change to the fullest effect. Followers want to see that their leaders embody the organisational change that they seek (Quinn *et al* 2000) and my research enabled me to recognise the view of my social world (McNay 2000) in this regard where I perhaps fell short of achieving this aim. As I continued to search for answers regarding ‘seeing myself strong enough as a change agent’, I considered my organisational position and reflected how my power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl

1998) and influence (Yukl 1998; Bass & Riggio 2006) within my leadership had been restricted by habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). These perspectives are discussed in more detail in chapter six as part of my leadership analysis. For now, perhaps it was my ‘quiet’ approach to leadership (Baccarado 2002) and my identity characteristic of calmness that endorsed the role of my identity within my change practice whilst paradoxically being the very trait that questioned the full potential of being a change agent (Eriksen 2008).

As my analysis developed, I had a sense that the role of identity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007) was pivotal in the conception and implementation of change. There was strong evidence from my social world (McNay 2000) and my reflexivity that change was a major part of my practice and I was perceived as a change agent (Eriksen 2008), albeit perhaps one that I may not have reached my full potential. The source of these observations was directly attributed to my identity. Change reflected my identity as I called upon my past to explain and substantiate this claim through my biography (Burnes 2004). My constructivist interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) of the data connected the role of identity in the initiation and implementation of change in my organisation and I considered that I could be described as a change agent (Bennis & Nanus 1985; Eriksen 2008). The perspective of the identity of a change agent is limited in extant literature (Reissner 2010; George & Jones 2001; Wirth 2004) and is absent from change models (Pendlebury *et al* 1998; Kotter 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003). I posit my identity was an influential element within the change process and offered a balance to the emphasis in the literature on the functional and processual aspects of change. My research revealed how I approached change as a response to my identity, values and behaviours, supporting the view that change was fundamentally about people (George & Jones 2001). My propensity for change was derived from myself and thus my identity became the first phase of my change process. It was from this source that my inspiration and initiation of change became enacted, prompted by my social world (McNay 2000) or a reflection. I experienced a transition period (Heathcote & Talyor 2007) that allowed my sense making and internal adjustment to take place before the change process moved to the more tangible phases where my identity, value and behaviours were represented in my practice.

## **Change, Leadership and Management**

Change is the essence of leadership and leading change is one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities (Yukl 1998). The role leaders play in the change process had been noted by change theorists (Kotter 1996; Zaleznik 1977; Adair 1990). Although it was claimed there was little integration in the literature between change and leadership (Eisenbach, Watson & Pillai 1999), several literatures have been published more recently that link the two concepts (Eriksen 2008; Luissier & Achua 2004; Gill 2003). This relationship was evident in my practice as observed by my social world (McNay 2000) based upon the following extracts from one-to-one interviews:

“An important thing about being a good leader is the fact that you need to recognise the need for change before you do it, which is something you do”  
(Trading Director)

“I also feel that you lead change in as much as you have to change your abilities and develop and constantly learn”  
(Buying Controller)

This construction connected change to leadership. The language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) used was a powerful illustration of the relationship between change and leadership and I interpreted the structure of the sentences to mean that leadership was a prerequisite for change “an important thing about being a good leader... is that you recognise the need for change” and “you lead change”. This comment illustrated that leadership cannot be separated from change (Adair 1990). Of further significance was the use of the word “you” that inferred change was directly associated with my identity (Adams 2007) in terms of originating and then leading change. Identity, change and leadership became intertwined and embodied (Eriksen 2008) in my practice.

The relationship between change and leadership was illustrated from another perspective. A senior colleague observed that:

“You believe in changing to meet the customer needs”  
(General Manager)

The inclusion of the words “changing” and “customer” relate directly to the definition of change offered by Moran & Brightman (2001) that referred to ‘the process of continually renewing an organisation’s direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers’. Although the word leadership was not specifically spoken, I interpreted this comment to mean (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) leadership. The statement “meet the customer needs” complemented the construction I identified and analysed in chapter six regarding my leadership practice titled ‘a focus on customers’. An interview extract included in that analysis is also apposite to this discussion;

“I always thought he was the main leader on the customer within the company - he’s the one that started all that”  
(Focus Group A)

There was a connection between leadership and customers (Moran & Brightman 2001; Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010) that connected to the previous extract regarding “changing to meet the customer needs”. Again my identity was represented by the words “you believe”. This espoused and enacted behaviour was borne out of my values and attitudes, a genuine desire to work towards the needs of customers (Moran & Brightman 2001) and to instigate change in order to achieve that aim. This act was located within myself. I was not responding to a request or a dictate from my social world (McNay 2000) as part of my role in the organisation, rather I instigated and led the change as an integral element of my practice.

There is an extensive debate in the literature regarding management and leadership (Kotter 1996) and the potential differences between the two concepts. It is interesting to note that both words are mentioned by colleagues in connection with my change practice:

Facilitator	“how do you think he manages change?”
Participant 2	“Probably very well”
Participant 1	“That’s his strength”
Participant 2	“Definitely”
Participant 3	“I think he instigates it”
Participant 2	“Yes, he’s extremely flexible, isn’t he?”

(Focus Group A)

“I think in terms of managing change you do that, you react to what needs to be done and this week’s a perfect example in terms of really looking at the advertising. You’re probably one of the keenest in the business to actually advertise but you took that very brave decision to say

it's not actually right for the business. So I think that demonstrates that you do adapt to change very quickly and for the right reasons”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

“I think in terms of bringing about change and the management of change in the business, you are probably one of the best examples in the company”  
(Trading Director)

As I reflected on these extracts, I recognised both management and leadership connotations. References to “managing change” were in evidence as well as the phrases “bringing about change” and “he instigates it” which suggested a leadership approach. Managing change was referred to as my “strength”, a comment that inferred a difference to leading change. I considered that my colleagues had used the words management and leadership interchangeably and without the perspective of academic differences on the use of these terms (Kotter 1996). The use of language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) is important here and it may be that management was a substitute for leadership in the way that my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) interpreted their meaning. If a clear distinction was intended, then both leading and managing change were part of my practice. Leading change (Kotter 1996) would refer to the “instigation” and managing change (Kotter 1996) would refer to “you react to what needs to be done”, thus distinguishing between the two concepts whilst integrating both within my practice. The distinction revealed by my social world (McNay 2000) between managing and leading change was reflected in the literature with specific references to change management (By 2005; Moran & Brightman 2001; Burnes 2004) and debates regarding change management and change leadership (Kotter 1996, 1999; Mulligan & Barber 1998; Gill 2003). My actions in being physically involved in ‘mundane behaviours’ (Nadler & Tushman 1990) such as arranging meetings, setting agendas and following up actions symbolised (Schein 1997) my involvement in the change initiative and represented an understanding by my colleagues of the concept of management rather than a charismatic portrayal of leadership as may be more commonly perceived. The ‘mundane behaviours’ are similar to those described as transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) in chapter six. Applying formulaic descriptions to observed behaviours and practices may result in an unnecessary definition of who one is or appears to be. Kotter (1996) distinguishes between leaders and managers in their orientation to change. My practice exhibited both leadership and managerial activities and my colleagues referred to me in both contexts. Contrary

to Kotter (1996), as a manager I was concerned with the organisations purpose and identity and I instigated strategic change where I considered it was necessary.

Transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) is primarily concerned with the capabilities required to enact change successfully and it was this style that I felt resonated most with my leadership practice. My research data provided clear evidence that change was a significant element of my practice and my identity played a pivotal role in how change was instigated and progressed. The concepts of leadership and/or management were directly associated with my change practice as observed by my social world (McNay 2000) and change became symbolic (Schein 1997) of my leadership.

### **Preparing for Change**

The analysis of my research data revealed a number of extracts that referred to the period when I first joined Peacocks and began working with the Marketing team. The comments below referred to their recollections of this time in the context of change:

“An interesting way of looking at this would be from when you first started in the company, because there’s a huge leap forward from where we were to where we are now; the amount of changes which have taken place within the department and the company at the same time”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

“The major thing was your determination and communication - that was the big change. There wasn't any before. You were only told what you needed to know. You started to communicate on two levels, first of all company strategy and activities, and then you had the department - that had never happened before and that was a real eye opener - everyone in the department was involved and we all sat down and we had regular meetings so everybody understood what our roles were and what we were doing - a big leap forward”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

“I think going back to the start, when you first came in, you had a team imposed upon you and there was a huge change to manage there from what you inherited to where you wanted to be, and I think your ideas changed in the first few months about how you wanted to do that. We set up the weekly meetings and those were excellent and the communication, everyone knew what was going on”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

“You were the new boy; everybody else was still sticking to the old ways of doing things. From our point of view it was great because we had somebody who was leading us forward and changing things, although sometimes it became difficult because we came up against others who did not see it that way”



(Marketing Manager 2)

Participants spoke in the interviews about my approach and behaviours in this early period where I began to learn about my new colleagues and the way in which the organisation worked. On reflection, this period can be described as ‘preparing for change’, akin to the preparation stage of the transtheoretical change model (Prochaska *et al* 2001) or the ‘unfreezing’ phase of Lewin’s force field theory (1951). This phase moved colleagues through the stages of realising that the ‘old ways’ of doing things are no longer adequate and that new ways were needed. Hence, from when I “first started in the company” the “a huge leap forward” was reflected in changes in the department and the company. Each extract referred to a change being detected in the social world (McNay 2000) in which we worked and illustrated how my contribution had enabled those changes to take place. By taking my role (Hirschhorn 2000) in the organisation I had attempted to change some aspects of habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). These changes reflected my attitudes and values with characteristics of my identity becoming embodied (Eriksen 2008) in my practice. I referred to my “determination” and “communication” as major catalysts in seeking “the big change” where a trait described by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) as determination was evident in my practice, one that I also identified as a feature of my identity (Adams 2006). It was clear that I had a different approach to the previous incumbent of my role (Hirschhorn 2000) and to the organisational culture (Schein 1997) in general illustrated by a research participants view that “you were only told what you needed to know”. By discussing “company strategy and activities” and involving “everyone in the department” in meetings and understandings, leadership was taking place through transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) behaviours. In these contexts, participants referred more to the concept of change rather than leadership per se, although the extract “we had somebody who was leading us forward and changing things” made a clear connection between change and leadership, change being the essence of leadership (Yukl 1998). A difference was observed in my style of working as “the new boy” to “everybody else” who were “still sticking to the old ways of doing things”, a comment that I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) to mean the old ways were not the best ways. This was amplified by the comment “sometimes it became difficult because we came up against others who did not see it that way” where resistance (Pawson 1994) to change and a challenge to

the balance of power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998) between individuals and/or departments became evident. I noted the use of the word “we” in this extract that symbolised (Schein 1997) the sense of a collective marketing department. I believed that a sub-culture (Palthe & Kossek 2003) had developed that represented our beliefs, attitudes and intentions.

An extract from my personal journal written at the beginning of my inquiry revealed some trepidation in assessing how I would approach the changes that I felt were necessary:

‘I remember at the time that I had different thoughts about the changes I wanted to make and how I should approach these. I was concerned not to act hastily but then I felt I needed to do something to say I was here and that changes were inevitable. Equally I didn’t want to do the wrong thing and isolate myself or create problems – my knowledge of Peacocks needed to be ‘up to speed’ on a number of areas and I thought that I should consult with colleagues. One other factor was being aware of any ‘sacred cows’ in the business that I might have been planning to change - what would others reactions be, what was being thought and said about the things I was doing. I was anxious about what to do but I knew that change had to happen and in some ways this would justify my appointment and role’.

(Personal Journal)

Reflexively, this early period was an important phase in introducing myself to my colleagues and attempting to establish my approach as a way of working as a group (Bion 1961) and with other departments. As “the new boy”, my values (Senge 1996) and attitudes had an impact on the working environment and change had been observed by those working with me and as the data revealed this was a different experience for the research participants. This phase of building relationships and understanding is a prerequisite to change. Extant change models tend to begin a change with ‘defining the vision’ (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998) or establishing a sense of urgency (Kotter 1996) as the first steps in creating change. My research indicated an initial period of assessment and thinking allowed an understanding of the change situation to be formulated before further phases were developed. This allowed the vision (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998; Kotter 1996), creating the guiding coalition and team working (Kotter 1996) and mobilising colleagues (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998) to be commenced. Even then, a full picture was not possible as multiple dimensions and interpretations contributed to a complex scenario. This included the views of other colleagues and the spectre of power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998) loomed as the politics (Hope 2010) of

interested parties became evident. These perspectives were part of the essential knowledge I required which proved invaluable as my thoughts turned to approaching the changes I considered were needed. In reality, although these early phases of activity can be identified separately, they do not follow such a prescribed path and there are aspects of each that run concurrently – understanding the situation, thinking about a vision (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) and beginning to plan how to approach and communicate the change (Kotter 1996). These aspects represented the conceptual framework of a change initiative prior to the practical phases becoming espoused and enacted.

### **Organisational Change in Practice**

The nature of the industry I worked in demanded change. The wider social world (McNay 2000) of consumers (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010) and fashion reflected changes at an environmental level (Kanter, Stein & Jick cited in Hatch 1997) and a postmodern world that was complex, plural and uncertain (McNay 2000). It is in this context that I attempted to change various aspects of Peacocks and the experiences and lessons of doing so form part of my research data.

The previous three constructions described how change originated from my identity (Adams 2007) and leadership and/or management (Kotter 1996). These perspectives became espoused and enacted as change became a practical reality for myself and my colleagues. I found that change was an ever present feature of my organisational life at strategic and operational levels (Burnes 2004). As head of marketing I was immersed in change. This reflected a definition of change as the process of continually renewing the organisations' direction, structure and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers (Moran & Brightman 2001). These aspects were particularly relevant to my leadership, presented in chapter six. My involvement with the development of a customer (Moran & Brightman 2001) and colleague culture (Schein 1997) and organisational strategy (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) could not be separated from change (Burnes 2004). Change was occurring at three levels – environmental, organisational and individual (Kanter, Stein & Jick cited in Hatch 1997). The social world (McNay 2000) in which Peacocks was located and the associated evolutionary forces of change that came from the behaviour of other organisations (Hatch 1997) prompted change. Second, change was driven from an

organisational perspective as a result of Peacocks position in its business lifecycle and in response to the relative size of the organisation and the rate of growth that was being experienced (Hatch 1997). At the individual level, change was instigated through my identity and empathy with the concept of change.

My inquiry enabled me to reflect and analyse my experiences of change drawn from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) and my own perspective and formed the basis of two examples of change that I experienced. The first example is based upon the changes I instigated in the marketing department (Workman & Jensen 2000) when I joined the company and the second involved a wider organisational development of the Peacocks brand and store presentation strategy. Both examples described the practical aspects of change and the issues I experienced as change unfolded within the organisation.

Changes began to take place when I joined Peacocks. A colleague in a one-to-one interview described the status of the marketing department when I joined the company:

“If you looked at the marketing department when you took over it was a mere service department, a printing department for promotional items - there was no market research, no idea who our customer was. You had a tricky situation because some on the Board didn't understand what marketing was all about and some thought they did. You almost had to educate the Board as to what marketing was, what we should be doing and the way forward, and then also within your own department, getting people on board with developments. I think from both perspectives that was a tricky job”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

This extract spoken some years later had an impact on me because it articulated a feeling of despondency associated with the marketing department (Workman & Jensen 2000) at the time I joined and the confused understanding of the role of marketing within the business at the most senior level. The use of the word “mere” suggested the department was not valued by others or even by those who worked in the department. It was important that I understood the position from the view of my colleagues and not just my own version of events. It was clear that the marketing function was not working and changes were required. Given changing consumer needs (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010) and the quick reactions of competitors (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010), the need for speed (Pendlebury, Grouard &

Meston 1998) in implementing change became paramount. It was at this stage that the previously identified construction ‘preparing for change’ was evident in my practice. Change also connected to leadership (Yukl 1998) and specifically transformational leadership (Lussier & Achua 2004), where the development of strategy (Burnes 2004) and organisational culture (Schein 1997) became integral to my practice. These retrospective observations identified the beginnings of self (Giddens 1992: Adams 2007), change (Pendlebury *et al* 1998; Kotter 1996; By 2005; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Burnes 2004) and leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) as the dominant themes within my practice.

The nature of change at this time was characterised by a range of different dimensions. Because this period was before the start of my inquiry, I relied on the data from the research interviews with colleagues on this early period of my practice. I also reflected on my memories and recollections and valuable clues were unearthed regarding my desire for change in response to the need for the organisation to change. I wrote in my personal journal a few years later about how I remembered the marketing department when I first joined Peacocks:

‘There were five members of the marketing department when I joined Peacocks and I was surprised how they worked and with the interrelationships between one another. They all worked individually – little was known about what the others were doing yet they were all in the same small office. Communication was minimal within the department and most of their activities were in response to other department’s needs. Methods of working were old fashioned, there was little technology in terms of systems or information and resources were limited. There was no marketing strategy and little direction from senior management. Attitudes were defensive, motivation was low and activities were reactive rather than proactive. As individuals, my team were likeable and there was an underlying enthusiasm – the situation had potential. They were also aware of the wider issue of the role of marketing at Peacocks and the board’s seemingly unclear understanding of what we could contribute’ (Personal Journal).

Reflecting on this description retrospectively it was clear that many changes had taken place. As my colleague said in a one-to-one interview:

“there’s a huge leap forward from where we were to where we are now; the amount of changes which have taken place within the department and the company at the same time” (Marketing Manager 1).

Together with the constructions regarding the role of my identity and leadership identified earlier, the comments from my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998)

demonstrated that changes took place and that my role had been that of a change agent (Erikson 2008).

My experiences of change illustrated the practical actions, behaviours and temporal perspectives involved in change contrasted with the conventional assumption that change was a finite, one-off phenomenon, representing the exception rather than the rule (Graetz & Smith 2010). Although the situation described by my journal entry and the earlier interview extract indicated that change was required, I was unclear as to how exactly any changes would materialise. At the time, I was not fully aware of the 'preparation for change' construction that my research had identified. The reality was that change was required on a number of fronts. These included the structural and functional activities of the marketing department (Workman & Jensen 2000), my contribution to the organisational strategy (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) where change cannot be separated from strategy (Burnes 2004) and my involvement with changing the organisational culture (Schein 1997). Change was about to become multidirectional (Kanter, Stein & Jack cited in Hatch 1997) and continuous (Burnes 2004). The elements necessary for change were present within my practice or the organisational environment and complemented the five dimensions of change identified by Pendlebury *et al* (1998) – strategy, structure, systems, culture and management style. From this beginning, small changes began to take place. I found it difficult to say if these were wholly planned changes or emergent changes (Bamford & Forrester 2003), in reality probably a mix of the two. I knew that changes were necessary and I approached these knowing my identity (Adams 2007) characteristics of calmness, quietness and being conflict averse would create an environment where change could be proposed by myself and begin to be understood by others. During my research interviews, my colleagues talked about the changes that took place in the marketing department:

“You started to communicate on two levels, first of all company strategy and activities, and then you had the department - that had never happened before and that was a real eye opener - everyone in the department was involved and we all sat down and we had regular meetings so everybody understood what our roles were and what we were doing - a big leap forward”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

The extract described how communication (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010) enabled a better understanding of the department and company activities. I considered

that it was a relatively easy and natural action to bring everybody together and share their experiences. The symbolic (Schein 1997) act of everybody sitting down in regular meetings created a powerful image of how the group (Bion 1961) began to work. Meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) and understanding contributed to the “big leap forward”. The principle of communication was included in several change models (Kotter 1996; Pendlebury *et al* 1998; Kanter *et al* 1992), albeit a few stages into the process. I found I was communicating to my group who in turn were communicating with themselves through planned and ad hoc meetings, talking and sharing. If barriers (Kotter 1996) were present, they were being tackled. These changes were happening before a vision (Schein 2000; Pendlebury *et al* 1998) for change was mentioned or even formulated. The concern was more focussed on how we should be working and attempting to instil values (Senge 1996) into daily practices. On reflection, this was a form of a vision (Schein 2000; Pendlebury *et al* 1998) although it was not consciously articulated or communicated in a visionary sense. Our language and social interaction through an embodied (Eriksen 2008) experience represented the intention of improving group working (French & Vince 1999) and communication (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). This was articulated in the form of a written Marketing Charter that the group developed and symbolised (Schein 1997) an intent to change:

“We created our Marketing Charter to improve how we worked. This included practical actions such as ‘answer telephones promptly and clearly’, ‘attend meetings on time’, ‘don’t keep visitors waiting’ and ‘take ownership of communications whether telephone, email or verbal’  
(Personal Journal).

These practical behaviours were suggested and agreed by all members of the marketing department and were based on the values (Senge 1996) of respect, trust and honesty that originated from my identity (Adams 2007). I encouraged a change in the attitudes and behaviours of others through the transformational leadership actions of influencing and coaching (Bass & Riggio 2006).

The marketing department structures were a dimension of change (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) that were evident in my research. During one-to-one interviews and focus groups, colleagues discussed how changes to department responsibilities and the role

(Hirschhorn 2000) of the marketing managers had contributed to improving respective colleagues' levels of motivation:

“We had the issue of what you considered non-marketing functions. It was early on that you decided new stores should be a retail function so that was something you handed over to the Retail department. That was very difficult because the culture of that time was to acquire as much as you can because there is less chance of being sacked. I started to get worried because you think if I'm only doing this, then I might be in danger. I think all of us in the department felt nervous. Although when I actually started to get on with the new role, I realised that instead of doing a 60% good job, I actually gained a lot more satisfaction because I was seeing the job right the way through and achieving a 90/95% satisfaction”

(Marketing Manager 1)

Facilitator “if he initiates change, what about the way he handles that change? If he turned round and said - I want you to change roles for instance”

Participant 2 “Well he actually did that with my colleague and myself and that was quite a tricky one for him because it was a big change and I was initially worried about how it would work out but I thought he handled that really well because we both came out of that very happy, whereas there was a risk of us both being very unhappy”

(Focus Group A)

The extracts from my social world (McNay 2000) gave an insight into the emotions (Fineman 1993) and anxiety (French & Vince 1999) that change created for my colleagues as the structure and circumstances of their roles were unfrozen (Lewin 1951) and a new situation presented. The changes I instigated were set in a power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998) based organisational culture where the threat of being sacked provided the impetus for employees to garner more responsibilities and once acquired, not to lose them. The phrases “I started to get worried”, “all of us in the department felt nervous” and “I was initially worried” represented the feelings of the department as uncertainty became the dominant thought regarding the changes. Handling this emotional dimension and the mental blockages (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) was an important step in gaining the support of my colleagues. The planned changes (Bamford & Forrester 2003) were designed to improve the work content and structure of the department in order to focus on core marketing activities given our limited resources. These were necessary so that future changes could be made concerning the Peacocks brand and store development. There was a sense of a vision (Schein 2000; Pendlebury 1998) at this stage for the need to change the consumer (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010) facing aspects of the business given the fast pace of change in the marketplace. These strategic (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) reasons became



influential in my explanation of the need for change (Burnes 2004) to my colleagues who would be fully involved in the work ahead.

Eventually all colleagues in the department experienced some change to their roles (Hirschhorn 2000) and responsibilities, some more than others. I learnt that change had a temporal dimension. Once the initial change was discussed and those involved had a realisation of how their daily work lives would be affected, a period followed where the change became real and experienced. Only at that stage was the result of the change understood, expressed by colleagues in their interviews with the phrases “I actually gained a lot more satisfaction” and “we both came out of that very happy”. The research interview had provided the participant the opportunity to reflect. I wondered whether these positive statements were said to me because I was present in the interview as an insider (Maydell 2010) and the effect of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996) may have occurred. This thought was countered by comments that came later where participants readily criticised aspects of my practice.

The original group of five colleagues eventually grew to over twenty as a result of other functions moving into the marketing department, for example customer service and store equipment. New recruits also joined in response to the introduction of new functions and the influence of changing technology (Adams 20007), including the development of a transactional website. Conversely, other functions, for example the sourcing of product packaging and new business development, were transferred out of marketing to other departments in the organisation over time. This created an almost continuous (Burnes 2004) feeling of change and in a wider sense the changes to the structure (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) of the marketing department symbolised (Schein 1997) change throughout the organisation. Paradoxically, the following extracts revealed how change had become expected within the department - a change in the pace of change had been experienced:

“Perhaps it’s time for a change, a change in roles, because you can feel that you are trotting out the same stuff. I feel that I’m doing that sometimes. The week can be mapped out, whereas before you couldn’t. I think because you introduced the change, you set expectations. Perhaps I’ve set my expectations of you and I’m waiting for the next new thing and it hasn’t happened for the last six months. You set the agenda for change”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

“When was the last time we talked about the marketing charter we did. People might toss their eyes and go not again but that’s the sort of thing which pulls you all together - this is what we agreed, is it out of date now, put something new in?”

(Marketing Manager 2)

“you were very proactive because everything you were bringing in was new, perhaps now is the time to bring in new things again. Because you're running it, we fit in to that. If you think of the changes you brought in, you created an environment for change that everybody was happy to go with and perhaps we need to do that again”

(Marketing Manager 1)

My two colleagues expressed their frustrations with how they perceived their roles, the lack of on-going discussion regarding the marketing charter which had become the symbol (Schein 1997) of our marketing culture and a decrease in the pace of my change agenda. These comments illustrated how change moved in phases of high and low activity. When a pace of change had been built, it became noticeable when a period of relatively little change took place. The comments also inferred that once a change had taken place and had been in operation, the effect of the change diminished with time. The change became part of the new way of working and accepted - refreezing (Lewin 1951) had taken place. In their comments, interview participants had projected (Hirschhorn 2000) their frustrations towards my containing (Bion 1970) empathy as a considerate leader (Kets de Vries 1994). The value of the interview was noted as I may not have been aware of my colleagues’ feelings until later when the situation could have deteriorated further. It was only when I was willing to engage in critical reflexive dialogue through the research interviews that I became consciously aware or could admit to these issues. I reflected on how this stagnant time in my change practice had come about. As a change agent (Eriksen 2008) I had been given a strong endorsement of my leadership of change (Yukl 1998) by my culture through the research interviews. The sense of expectation was high. I had been working on other organisational changes involving strategy (Burnes 2004) and culture (Schein 1997), demonstrating the multiple and complex (Kotter 1996) nature of my change practice and perhaps I had neglected my department for too long. My colleagues suggested that change stimulated change and someone is required to start and continue the effort. As leader, this was my responsibility. I considered my change practice to be strong yet even here there were periods where change occurred less. When the pace of change had been fast and there was a dip in the initiatives, then colleagues noticed this. My identity (Adams 2007) characteristics of wanting to please

others, containing (Bion 1970) colleague's projections (Hirschhorn 2000) and my depressive (Obholzer 1996) position where I looked to myself first for the reasons for a situation rather than blaming others were instrumental in accepting the comments from my colleagues. I was also aware of my capacity for complacency at times and a laissez-faire leadership style (Bass & Riggio 2006). I began to understand through my research with my social world (McNay 2000) that my change practice was a combination of my own initiatives together with those stimulated by the needs and thoughts of generalised others (Gergen 2000). To this end I had responded to habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) whilst being aware that 'change for change sake' is a path not to be trodden.

The second example of my experience of change involved the development of the Peacocks brand and store presentation strategy. The seeds of this change lay in the fast changing social world (McNay 2000) and increasing competitor pressures (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010) that a business positioned in the retail fashion market faced. My understanding and constructivist interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) of the external environment (Kanter, Stein & Jack cited in Hatch 1997) led to a realisation that internal change was required to meet changing customer needs (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010). I considered change was a natural response to internal and environmental conditions (Leifer 1989). Peacocks could only change through the actions of its members (George & Jones 2001) and I envisaged this initiative as a corporate change (Nelson 2003) that would become integral to the forward business strategy (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009). This has been described as transformational leadership (Burnes 2004). I anticipated the principal of change in this sphere of activity would become continuous (Burnes 2004) and anchored (Kotter 1998) within the organisation as a necessary response to the rapidly changing world (Gergen 2000). These aims formed part of my vision (Kotter 1996; Pendlebury 1998) for the change together with the objectives, strategy and tactics (Lynch 2009) to address the specific business issue. I believed that it was vital to integrate a customer (Moran & Brightman 2001) perspective into the culture (Schein 1997) of the organisation and given that I was heavily involved in the programme of organisational culture change, I considered it was logical to combine the two streams of change activity. This cast the change in ideological terms i.e. a customer philosophy as well as in economic terms (Lussier & Achua 2004), demonstrating the multi-directional

(Hatch 1997) nature of change. As Head of Marketing, this strategic move became the central feature of my role (Hirschhorn 2000) for a period of twelve months.

This change initiative was a continuation from a previous re-branding and store refit programme that commenced in 2001 and was completed in 2004. Over three hundred stores were refitted with a new brand design and shop fit and this had been my project from inception to completion. I included the story of this change as part of my leadership analysis in chapter six. So it followed that I was about to repeat the same exercise. By telling this story, I hoped to make sense (Weick 1995) and meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) from my experiences with change at the workplace (Linde 1993).

Although Peacocks was generally a ‘follower’ (Kotler 1991) in the market, we also needed to keep pace with the changes albeit later than the market leaders:

‘my visit last week to the recently opened Bullring shopping centre in Birmingham showed just how far we have slipped behind our competitors. Their stores are modern, scream out fashion and look good to shop in. Ok, we are not Top Shop or New Look and these are their top new city centre stores, but there is a world of difference between ourselves and these. Both have just announced that many of their existing stores will be refurbished and together with the newer George and Tesco and Tu brands, we’ll be squeezed. I’ve got to make sure I talk to my lot this week before we see the md at next week’s meeting’  
(Personal Journal)

I felt a sense of urgency (Kotter 1996) in the situation in response to my assessment of the market and competitive realities (Kotter 1996). I reacted (Burnes 2004) to the changing environment (Kanter, Stein & Jack cited in Hatch 1997) that became a driving force for change (Pendlebury *et al* 1998). Visiting the stores in Birmingham had inspired me to revisit this aspect of the business knowing that I would face a great deal of questioning, resistance (Pawson 1994) and possibly emotions (Fineman 1993) as a response to my proposals. Although I had been aware for some time about the need (Burnes 2004) for change, this feeling had been overlaid by a multitude of other activities and changing situations and had not surfaced until my store visit when in a moment of spontaneity I realised the importance of the need for change (Burnes 2004). It was after all five years since I was inspired in a similar way and the changes in the social environment (Gergen 2000) and customer needs (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010) had moved on again. I began to appreciate how quickly change can happen in situations that I was closely involved with. As I took a step back and

attempted to strategically (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) view how change had taken place in the environment, I was surprised at the scale of the changes that competitors (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010) had developed. I was also disappointed that I had not detected the moves earlier and along with my colleagues I had become complacent and myopic, content that the recently completed refit programme that had delivered strong commercial results would not require another phase until much later. It was from this change that the seeds of the next change were sown, illustrating the continuous nature of change (Burnes 2004) and the role of the individual (Mead 1934) as a change agent (Eriksen 2008) in the instigation of change. I had an inner conviction for change that was transformed into external action (Obholzer 1987).

As my thoughts were formulating regarding the change of branding and store presentation, I proposed a structural (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) organisational change involving the potential transfer from the Estates department of the store shop fitting and equipment sections into the marketing department to complement the design and visual marketing activities. I believed that this would improve the internal system of new store design and store presentation, where the resources of the two departments could be combined to produce a more effective and efficient system. This modification to part of the organisational structure would facilitate my proposed change in the branding and store presentation and align the structure and control processes involved (Porras & Hoffer 1996; Galpin 1996). I realised that this would be a controversial proposal and politically (Hope 2010) sensitive. My reasoning was based upon the inconsistencies and variations of the work carried out by the Estates department and observed on completion of a new store. Their subjective interpretations of the Marketing brief had lasting effects on the shape of the store and the ability to merchandise the product ranges in the most effective manner. Walls were moved, windows relocated, till points altered and store fascia designs changed. The customer needs (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010) became a low priority. When the Marketing team came into the new store for the final presentation phase of layout, graphics and equipment, there was usually something that had changed and Marketing had not been informed. This created delays in re-sourcing marketing items. Invariably the reasons given for the changes were concerned with building regulations, costs or technical reasons. I viewed the lack of communication (Kotter 1996) between the two departments as a fundamental reason for these issues. As Head

of Marketing, I criticised myself for contributing to the situation. I recognised this trait in my leadership practice where my depressive position (Obholzer 1996) acknowledged my contribution when things went wrong rather than blaming others. My proposed solution was to integrate the functions to establish communication and understanding and thereby improve the standard of new store openings. As I was about to propose a new development of the brand design and store presentation that the Estates department would be involved in, it seemed an appropriate time to change the structures (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) necessary for the new phase to be operationally effective. Although these reasons summarised my business rationale, the human aspect was another consideration. The political (Hope 2010) and emotional (Fineman 1993) reactions to my proposal were not favourable. An acrimonious meeting was held against a background of conflict (Kolb & Putnam 1992), resistance (Pawson 1994) and fear of losing power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998; Conner 1995):

‘I knew that the Estates department were not going to give this up easily, with the consequent loss of responsibility and influence. I thought again about the pros and cons of the situation and that we as a department and the business cannot carry on with these issues, compromising our standards. My line director, although he understood the situation, was very reluctant to take up the case. He was very political and seemed reluctant to take up what was to be a battle that he did not want to fight as this may have impacted on his other responsibilities for buying and merchandising. We arranged a meeting that included myself, my creative controller, the Estates manager and his assistant, the chief executive, my director and the Estates director. We sat down and the positions of our seats clearly represented the divide between the two departments - Marketing on one side of the table, Estates on the other. It wasn’t intended to be like that – it just happened – but the physical layout added to the adversarial feeling in the room. Here was one department, the ‘new’ marketing team, trying to take over some of the work of the long established Estates department. We made our cases, objections and counter-points were raised, and as the meeting went on, I began to realise what was happening. In my naivety, I had thought that we would all have a good and passionate discussion and then the chief executive would decide the outcome. What was now clear was that the outcome had previously been agreed between the three directors – we were just going through the motions in the meeting. It was something that was done more and more by the directors. I would rather have been told what the decision was and then time would not have been wasted. It had been decided that only the equipment function would move into Marketing, not the store shop fitting function. I found out later that the Estates director and my director had come to an agreement on this matter as part of a larger agreement on other issues’.

(Personal Journal)

I had mis-judged the complexity of the situation and I questioned whether as a change agent I had the necessary leadership behaviours to implement change. I felt disappointed after the meeting. Initially this was due to only the equipment function being transferred. The potential for future mistakes was still present. I had not made a compelling case for change (Lussier & Achua 2004). I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln

2003) the decision as a reflection of the existing system being geared to make the operation work and not to destabilise the existing state (Pendlebury *et al* 1998). Politics (Hope 2010) was at the centre of the decision. Faced with entrenched positions at board level, I had not been able to unfreeze (Lewin 1951) the existing system. I resolved myself to ensure that we would improve our future communication in this regard, looking to myself (Obholzer 1996) to find a solution. My emotion (Fineman 1993) was more of annoyance with the way that the meeting had been handled by the directors. There appeared to be a hidden agenda and delaying tactics were evident. The mood of the meeting was symbolised (Schein 1997) by the physical seating of the 'two sides' in an adversarial position on either side of the table (Goffman 1959). The values (Erikson 1995) that I upheld were not in evidence by those who were in a position to set an example of behaviour in an organisation that was attempting to change the internal culture (Schein 1997). My values (Senge 1996) clashed with those of my superiors (Pepper & Larson 2006). I found I was turning my frustrations onto my identity (Adams 2007) and my naïve understanding of politics (Hope 2010) and power situations (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998). I considered that others may have thought that I was attempting to increase my power through extending my responsibilities, a thought that in hindsight left me wondering if that had been an unconscious prompting (Freud 1900) on my part.

Undaunted, I continued my proposal for the development of the Peacocks brand and store presentation strategy. I moved the change vision (Kotter 1996; Lussier & Achua 2004) to the group level (Harvey & Brown 1996) and communicated the need to change (Battilana *et al* 2010). I was conscious that we had just completed refitting three hundred stores with the purple design and I was concerned about the reaction from the board of directors. I knew that the initiative would take at least six months to develop and that some directors could not understand why we were changing so quickly, views that were barriers to change and revealed a complacency and inward focus (Kotter 1998):

'I was feeling very uneasy about the prospect of continuing to argue for the new development. Some of the directors had changed in the intervening period but now I felt that I was almost being blamed for the decision to go with the previous purple design, although commercially it was a success. My colleagues were taking a slightly myopic view of the changing social environment where the market had moved very quickly to 'value fashion', ideal for Peacocks. There was a need to re-think how we presented ourselves to our customers and particularity a

growing younger customer who shopped in retailers such as Top Shop, New Look and River Island. I knew that several of the directors were very reluctant to see another major change in a relatively short time span. I pressed the point that if we don't start to change now, we'll be left behind again. It would take time to be up and running with any branding change. There was a split in the opinions of the directors – some wanting to progress with the development and some not. I knew that if I could get the support of the Group Chief Executive, managing director and the finance director, they would swing the rest of the board. There was, as ever, an issue over development costs and the capital expenditure budget going forward'.  
(Personal Journal)

Having explained the need for change to my colleagues, I became less sensitive to some of their criticisms. There was an air of mixed commitment with some resistance (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010) based on having to face another change of institutionalised routines and practices (George & Jones 2001) that had become part of habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). It appeared that a powerful enough guiding coalition (Kotter 1996) was in question. I suggested that we should trial the new look in a new store and then review how it worked and to give everyone a chance to comment. I was not proposing to have a 'revolution' more of an 'evolution' and there might be a short term win (Kotter 1996) that would give encouragement for the next phase. By approaching the change in a measured manner, we would judge it as we went along. Without the same level of legitimate power (French & Raven 1959) as the directors, I relied on influencing (Yukl 1998) to persuade those who had the authority (Obholzer 1994) to agree with the proposal. There were signs that some unfreezing (Lewin 1951) was happening and others were mobilised to support the change (Battilana et al 2010).

During the course of this change initiative, I experienced a range of feelings and emotions (Fineman 1993) derived from the comments or actions of others and my own values and personality traits. Although I was the instigator, the change initiative triggered my emotions as I experienced the physical processes and outcomes of the transformation (Smollan & Sayers 2009). I had set my ideas out and I did not want to have to compromise them for political (Hope 2010) reasons, but relationships and politics were very much the centre of activity. I was frustrated that some 'others' did not see the need for change – perhaps that was my responsibility to communicate (Kotter 1996) and explain more for the need to change. There were two senior colleagues who were particularly vocal in their resistance (Pawson 1994). My approach was to make sure I behaved in the right manner and handled their



destructive comments and negativity as best I could. I felt very uncomfortable in several board meetings, internal feelings that I had to hide through my external behaviour. I felt at times that I was putting on a performance (Goffman 1959). On other occasions colleagues interfered, criticised, talked to others behind my back and excluded me from some of the discussions. I became paranoid. Colleagues had different views but that was no excuse for excluding me from situations where I should have been involved. Power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998) was high on the agenda. A director would speak to another director and agree something, I might be told, or not, and then I raised a valid point which negated their decision. On reflection, I recognised that my reactions to certain people stemmed from my not 'suffering fools gladly'. Perhaps I had been too "aloof". There will always be people who pose problems of some sort, intentionally or not, and how I dealt with these situations in a change context became a test of my identity and leadership.

In contrast to these somewhat challenging situations, the new branding also produced positive feelings (Antonacopoulou & Gabriel 2001), a validation of the work I had been doing as we moved through the various stages of the development and when the first store opened in the new design in Crawley and then soon after in Bristol. The reaction from colleagues and our customers (Moran & Brightman 2001) was very positive. The board were also generally positive, although the next stage of the development had yet to be discussed. It was eventually decided to continue to open all new stores in this design and to begin another refit programme of the larger existing stores. This would replace the purple design that I had pioneered some five years before. It was a symbolic (Schein 1997) manifestation of change and had a particular resonance for my own change practice. The change was consolidated and produced further change (Kotter 1996). The meaning I interpreted from these developments was that the change had become accepted and the stage of embedding (Bryant 2003) into the activities of the organisation had begun. I hoped that this phase would not be followed by a re-freezing (Lewin 1951) and that change would be continuous (Burnes 2004) and anchored in the organisational culture (Kotter 1996).

Despite the positive reaction and the beginning of a new phase for the organisation, I received no thanks, no acknowledgement, salary increase or any other form of recognition. My expectations that the organisational change I had instigated and

implemented may have had a beneficial effect on my career in some way were disappointed (Reissner 2010). I felt very low. I had not been asked by my directors to undertake this initiative. I would have had a much easier twelve months if we had continued in the old purple design. But then that was not the right course to take. The initiative was an example of a change driven from the bottom up (Bamford & Forrester 2003) and I saw my role embodied (Eriksen 2008) in the project. My senior colleagues appeared to have forgotten where the strategic need and the inspiration came from, let alone the project management, budgeting and all the other necessary surrounding activities that were required, those that can be described as 'mundane behaviours' as part of instrumental leadership (Nadler & Tushman 1990). Perhaps I should not be so sensitive. I was after all just doing my job. Perhaps I overestimated my role in the change scenario (Sommer & Baumeister 1998). I felt slightly rejected, although this feeling is connected to my need to be liked, a throwback to my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) and my relationship with my parents. This was compounded by my ever-present anxiety (Armstrong 2004) and inner lack of confidence and I had to fight hard to overcome these feelings (French & Vince 1999) through my identity characteristics of calmness, maintaining respectful behaviours and at times putting on a performance (Goffman 1959).

My inquiry enabled the two examples of my experience of change outlined above to be analysed based on data collected from interviews with colleagues and my personal journals. Both examples described the practical aspects of change and the issues and emotions (Fineman 1993) that I experienced as change unfolded within the organisation. Reflexively I considered a number of observations that emanated from my research inquiry regarding change. There were similarities with aspects of extant change literature as well as new observations that were pertinent to my situation. I found that the inspiration for change originated from a thought or a reflection in action (Schon 1983). This could be a reaction (Burnes 2004) to an observation I made or an event that happened around me. I could be prompted by a conversation with a colleague or another form of communication such as an email. The influence of my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) was significant, either in a direct sense or through my own socially constructed (Alvesson & Robertson 2006) identity. My identity trait of wanting to please others appeared to be a reason for how I responded to some of my perceived demands from habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and created a need

for continuous change (Burnes 2004). Even my emotions, such as my anxieties or fear of failure, were a trigger for change (George & Jones 2001). These scenarios created the seed of a change that emerged from my social world (McNay 2000). The germination period of that change would consist of my internal contemplation and preparation (Prochaska *et al* 2001) before some action was taken.

My experiences confirmed that change was an ever present feature of organisational life Burnes (2004) even though the pace of change was subject to fluctuations. It was also an ever present feature of my practice and work. I experienced change at three levels (Hatch 1997) – environmental via my social world (McNay 2000) and the changing customer needs (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010); organisational via structural, cultural and strategic changes as the business grew; and individual via changes to my attitudes and behaviours. Lewin's (1951) definition of change as transient stability interrupting an otherwise stable equilibrium (Hatch 1997) did not reflect my experiences, rather I experienced change was continuous (Burnes 2004). Within continuous change there were periods where the rate of change was slow and then increased, as observed by my colleagues in their comments regarding the pace of change within the marketing department. This pattern can be described as 'bumpy continuous change' (Grundy 1993). There were variations in the depth, speed and in the way change was instigated (Pendlebury *et al* 1998). Given the multidirectional (Kanter, Stein & Jack cited in Hatch 1997) nature of change, it was inevitable that numerous changes took place concurrently. These ranged from major strategic organisational changes (Nelson 2003) for example, the changes to the store branding and design and the organisational culture and structures, to change at the level of ordinary everyday life (Hatch 1997), for example, a change to a regularly held meeting time or a colleagues' turn to make the tea for the week ahead.

There is a tendency in change modules to describe broad patterns of organisational change rather than on change at the lower levels of organisations (Hatch 1997). The emphasis in the change literature on organisational change and the key role the 'magic' leader plays (Graetz & Smith 2010) reflects a changing global economy and environment (Callero 2003; Gergen 2000). There were many other change situations that happened at a lower level in the organisation that affected individuals and groups through changes to department structures, roles or behaviours (Pendlebury *et al* 1998).

My research illustrated this lower level of change within the marketing department (Workman & Jensen 2000). The effects of wider organisational change were also cascaded to a lower level and witnessed through my emotional and behavioural experiences as I sought to instigate a major organisational change (Nelson 2003). From a strategic viewpoint, the ripple effect of change is one that can often be undetected at an individual level. As the change agent (Eriksen 2008) I experienced a mixture of emotion (Fineman 1993) and frustration mainly associated with driving change from a lower level in the organisation rather than change being a top-down initiative. My identity characteristics and values (Senge 1996) were instrumental in pursuing the change that I believed in and the barriers of a lack of legitimate power and politics were overcome by influencing and persuasion.

The emergent approach tended to see change driven from the bottom up (Bamford & Forrester 2003; Burnes 2004) rather than top down, although the word 'emerged' does not adequately describe the situational (Dunphy & Stace 1993) nature of the brand and store development change. I would describe the pattern of events as a reactive change that was in response to a changing environment (Leifer 1989). This description also reflected the speed required to implement the change rather than 'emerged' which suggested a slower pace.

Although Pettigrew and Whip (1993) argued there were no universal rules for leading change, there are several sequences of actions that have been outlined. Some authors offer practical guidelines (Lewin 1951; Kotter 1996; Pendelbury *et al* 1998; Kanter *et al* 1992). The underlying assumption of these models is that organisational change involves a series of predictable steps that can be planned and managed (Collins 1998). This uni-dimensional, rational focus is limited because it treats change as a single, momentary disturbance that must be stabilised and controlled (Graetz & Smith 2010). I detected a strong leaning towards a functionalist (Burrell & Morgan 1979) paradigm within change literature models, with a structured linear approach based upon an objectivist epistemology (Hatch 1997). The principles are useful yet my understanding of change as part of a continuing work in progress involves competing voices and is subject to the ambiguities, contradictions and tensions of messy reality. The sequential and rational order of events as defined in change models seemed to lose their relevance as activities are reversed, directions changed, new

aspects included and unplanned events responded to. The irrational, the creative and the intuitive aspects of cognition and behaviour needed to be accounted for. I found change was contingent on specific circumstances and factors and it is here that the real-life influences have major effects on the change process. Traditional approaches to organisational change generally assume the focus is on controllability by a strong leader or 'guiding coalition' (Graetz & Smith 2010). I was not in that position given my place in the organisational hierarchy. The image of a 'hero CEO' (Senge 2001 p.10) who only may be able to implement and start change and organisational actors will respond enthusiastically and uniformly to their leader's call to arms contrasted with my practice. As a senior manager with a degree of influence on my directors sense making, I exerted the power of meaning (Hope 2010) in an attempt to command their attention. As the branding and store presentation proposed change developed and became more tangible, then cooperation improved. I found my colleagues interpreted situations in different ways to myself and they could be irrational with different perceptions of 'reality' (Wilkinson 1997). I found these differences difficult to understand because they contrasted with my professional knowledge (Schon 1987) and purpose of the change initiative. Some still continued to question why the change was necessary even when the initial feedback had been positive. Some of these reactions affected the change through delays, unintended consequences and successive redesigns of interventions. There was not a unified view of the organisations future reality, a function of postmodernism (Graetz & Smith 2010). My influencing became a political behaviour (Hope 21010) and one that I recognised I was not adept at. I experienced organisational change as a power struggle (Mintzberg 1984) where I was seeking to overcome my lack of legitimate power through the behaviours of my identity (Adams 2007) and influencing (Yukl 1998). Power was used by others as a mechanism for control rather than as a collective means to achieve change. I attempted to locate my power in my professional knowledge and articulated this through a discourse (Foucault 1980) that was at times at odds with my social world (McNay 2000). This demonstrated a connection between power, politics, and change.

As the change initiatives I described became a reality, I had a sense of achieving a transformation of a major aspect of the organisation that was symbolised (Schein 1997) in a multitude of visual references throughout the stores and offices of the

business and a realisation that another phase of organisational development had commenced. My learning (Coad & Berry 1998) was that complacency and self-satisfaction were danger signals that could prevent future changes. Although there is a degree of institutionalising the change (Nadler & Tushman 1990), the open-ended and continuous nature of change should be recognised to enable the organisational change agent (Eriksen 2008) to respond to the multiplicity of changes manifested in a rapidly changing postmodern social world (McNay 2000) that is multiplicitous, fragmented and contradictory (Graetz & Smith 2010). This postmodern approach challenged grand theories about organisational change and recognised that change was a function of socially constructed views of reality contributed by multiple players (Buchanan 2003). Paradoxically, I realised that I was attempting to create an improved brand and store presentation based on uniformity and consistency against a backdrop of an ephemeral, fragmented and chaotic social world (White & Jacques 1995). Since there is no universal ‘truth’ or reality about anything, the mere attempt to categorise change in the context of a postmodern philosophy is inappropriate and flawed.

### **A Changing Self**

The autobiographical (nature of my inquiry allowed me to access my social world (McNay 2000) and my reflexivity to examine aspects of how I changed over a period of time as a result of working in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). There has already been a significant body of knowledge and analysis presented in this and the previous chapter concerning myself and my change practice. I was aware that I had certain behavioural traits that were attributed to my identity, such as being “aloof” at times, and that the idea of weaknesses such as an avoidance of conflict, was also present and affected my leadership practice. Being a person who recognised my faults before blaming others, my depressive position (Obholzer 1996) at least placed me in a position to discover and then possibly change aspects of myself. As an insider (Maydell 2010) in my research I was able to source and constructively interpret (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) the data from my social world (McNay 2000). The concept of change implied that a state of affairs was not satisfactory. I relied on my colleagues to provide the valuable insight that would enable me to understand where the areas of my practice were or had been unsatisfactory. Even though I was known to the interview participants and in a position of legitimate power over several colleagues who worked for me, I anticipated their truths (Gergen 2000) would be forthcoming

even though I was present in the one-to-one interviews where demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996) can influence what is said by research participants. The value of conducting a second phase of interviews was reflected in the data that was recorded. Participants were asked to consider areas of my practice that had changed (Appendix 3).

The extracts I selected for analysis referred to several vignettes that demonstrated change had taken place to myself and my practice. I was aware of the dangers of being both researcher and subject (Ellis 2004) and the temptation to portray a positive response to the initial criticisms or weaknesses that participants identified. The following extracts reported the views of my social world (McNay 2000) and my analysis points to certain changes I made. These may have been intentional changes, even planned (Bamford & Forrester 2003) in response to initial comments that indicated an attitude or a behaviour required attention. There is also an element of a natural (Graetz & Smith 2010) change as I learnt over time and perhaps as I grew older:

“What I would say is that I have seen a complete change, the way you actually manage people I think has changed a lot. When you reported to R. and the way you responded to him was how he wanted you to respond and you did which perhaps wasn't right for you. Since he has left you've now moved on and I think this has been a big change for you and allowed you to develop and really get into your job”  
(Chief Executive)

“I saw a change possibly a year and a half, two years ago where suddenly you were empowered and you started to change and if I was describing you now I would say you are so different to the way you were and that is that you're now enthusiastic, capable, experienced, bright, whereas I think before you weren't coming over exactly in that way”  
(Trading Director)

I found these two statements from my line directors to be powerful and meaningful (Sommer & Baumeister 1998). I reflected on my behaviours before this change took place and I retrospectively played back in my mind how I perceived my practice to have been at the time when I worked for my director (referred to as R.). This period was at the start of my employment with the organisation when I wanted to create a good impression and begin to make the changes that I believed were necessary to the department and the organisation. The extract “the way you responded to him was how he wanted you to respond and you did” indicated that my identity characteristics of

wanting to please others, especially those in authority, and avoiding potential conflict were the dominant drivers of my behaviours at the time. The extract continued with the phrase “which perhaps wasn't right for you” and this suggested that my colleague had observed that my identity had been constrained in some way and there was uneasiness about the situation. Although interview comments from my marketing team concerning this period had seen me in a more positive light, my directors had taken a different view. On reflection, perhaps my marketing colleagues had thought the same and were reluctant to disclose their views given the demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996) of the interview. Not for the first time was there contradictory (Gergen 2000) data from different sources and there was no one answer (Gergen 2000) to how participants subjectively interpreted my practice. I made sense (Reissner 2010) of the multiple streams of data by understanding that my practice had been observed in different ways by different colleagues. The phrases “complete change” and “you are so different to the way you were” demonstrated that a significant change had taken place. I had become “enthusiastic, capable, experienced, bright”. I was not aware of a specific reason for these changes. It was pointed out by my colleague that I was “empowered” which prompted the thought that a change in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) with a new director had encouraged me to be more confident and motivated. Perhaps I was concerned with pleasing others and the attitudes and behaviours of my true self (Schlenker 1985) being more evident.

An extract from an interview with a marketing colleague gave another perspective in understanding my changed practice:

“I think you are very good at managing yourself upwards. I think somewhere along the line you have actually decided to do that - I don't think that comes natural to you. Not brown nosing - there's a difference. You can sit down with the directors and stand your ground but in a good sort of way”  
(Creative Controller)

This comment “you are very good at managing yourself upwards” resonated with me on hearing it and again when I transcribed the interview there was something in what my colleague said that I recognised in my behaviour. I connected this comment to those of my directors with a view to a cause and effect explanation as to why my directors had observed a change in my practice. Some unconscious (Adams 2003) happening or even a serendipitous moment had “somewhere along the line” occurred



that had changed my behaviour. I cannot remember making a conscious decision to manage myself “upwards” but this may have occurred as a result of a relatively fragile relationship with my previous director. I was initially concerned about what had been said because it sounded as if I was demonstrating a high level of self-interest, possibly thinking about my own position and career. I would not have wanted to act in that way. However, I realised that in order to represent my department in the political (Hope 2010) atmosphere that prevailed and to garner the support for the changes I envisaged, I would need a good relationship with my directors. As my marketing colleague correctly observed “I don't think that comes natural to you” and many times I felt uncomfortable and unnatural in meetings or conversations. I was consciously putting on a performance (Goffman 1959), one that evidently was not sufficient to convince one colleague, and probably others, that this ‘way of working’ was my preferred style and reflective of my identity.

As time moved on I established myself as part of the senior management team and my work and that of the marketing department contributed to the development of Peacocks. The changes to the internal customer culture and the tangible changes to the stores and brand that I instigated formed the basis of my position in the organisation. In addition to the changes that originated from myself, I was required to respond to other changes in the organisation that ranged from decisions made by the board of directors that had to be complied with to more informal changes such as colleagues having the choice of what to wear at work. My willingness to change (Burnes 2004) could generally be viewed as complying with the formal requests even if I found it difficult to do so. The more informal changes would be dependent on each circumstance.

Underlying my responses to changes in my social world (McNay 2000) were changes to aspects of my identity that appeared to have a temporal dimension and centred on the emotional (Fineman 1993) aspects of my identity. Competing demands and expectations had an impact on my sense of self (Galpin & Sims 1999). Although I considered that I retained my core values of loyalty, honesty and fairness these were paradoxically the values that led to changes in my attitudes and behaviours. I naively expected others to behave in a similar manner to my own values, even more so when the internal culture programme had been ostensibly led by the chief executive as

leader of the organisation. I recognised that I lapsed from time to time in some of my attitudes and behaviours regarding the cultural standards that we should aspire to, but as this inquiry will attest, I strove to behave within my personal values (Senge 1996) and the values that the senior management of the organisation. I was disappointed and demoralised when others, particularly those at director level, did not subscribe to the values that they should, as ‘leaders’, be espousing. My colleague was aware of my concerns:

“I know you want the culture to succeed and you are disappointed if it doesn't. I think you show frustration with your peers if they are not coming along with it”  
(General Manager)

This issue led to a change in how I dealt with the poor level of cultural behaviours in the organisation. I maintained my own standards and values (Senge 1996) but reluctantly lowered my expectations of others on the basis of the reality I was experiencing in habitus (Adams 2006). I reacted in a different way to the many occasions when I was not included in a discussion related to a marketing activity, where certain colleagues were constantly late or cancelled meetings or where points were made to the chief executive by others on marketing issues but did not have the courtesy to keep me up to date. I previously would have felt internally annoyed and may even have complained to my director. Instead I reverted to almost accepting these instances would occur and indeed they became the norm. I was less anxious and my calmness became my dominant emotion (Fineman 1993). As a result I was less stressed, recognising that others may not be able to change their behaviours. I was faced with contradictory (Gergen 2000) positions with my own views and those of others.

The second phase of interviews revealed a change in my attitudes and behaviours:

Participant 1 “he seems to be more laid back about things than before”

Participant 2 “Do you think he's lost some of his fight?”

Participant 3 “Maybe. I think he's less intense about the things that he saw as not being right. Sometimes it's a bit like why should I bother, but deep down you still get the feeling he wants to move everything on, like the new branding and store design and he's been going on about the website a lot recently”

Participant 2 “I remember last time we said he always wore a suit, even on a Friday when everyone dressed down. Well at least he dresses casually on a Friday now – in fact I've seen him on other days as well, so if that's anything to go by he's probably feeling a bit more relaxed”

(Focus Group B)

It was clear from my colleagues' comments that my attitudes and behaviours had changed. Being "more laid back" and "less intense" are observations that described an amendment to previous behaviours, whereas "lost some of his fight" and "it's a bit like why should I bother" were more fundamental changes. These suggested a significant downturn in my attitudes and motivation that I can only ascribe to the cultural, political and power aspects of habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) that clashed with my identity characteristics. I could constructively interpret (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) events in a personal manner and this could influence my practice at work when combined with my avoidance of conflict, perfectionist tendencies and my desire to please others.

As a department head, I was responsible for my team, their activities and their needs. My natural (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) capacity to listen reinforced a dialogue that enabled colleagues to direct their comments, criticisms and projections (Hirschhorn 2000) towards me. As leader and an individual, I was aware of being the 'container' (Bion 1970) for others that in some cases resulted in wanting to please others and not necessarily just my directors. It was within my legitimate power to agree with requests from my subordinates and I did so at times to avoid a confrontation. Coupled with a reluctance not to admit mistakes or miss a deadline, my anxieties ran high at times. Many of these feelings were hidden from my colleagues, or so I thought. As a leader, it was necessary to understand and manage my anxieties to overcome resistances to the change process (French & Vince 1999). The risk was to adopt social defences (Hirschhorn 1988) to avoid such anxieties. I reflected on the changes that my colleagues alluded to in the above extract above. I also felt that I had changed in the way I approached certain situations. I mistakenly thought that trying to be 'perfect' would progress my career. I found that being less anxious allowed my natural calmness to come to the fore. When plans did not work out or mistakes were made, I said so and apologised. I changed the way I listened and responded to colleagues' comments, becoming more considered in my approach and less willing to agree or give way to their requests.

My changed approach was in evidence concerning an issue that was raised by my social world (McNay 2000). The concern involved how I managed conflict and confrontation where I was observed by colleagues to avoid conflict and not identify

potential conflict situations early in order to resolve the relevant issues. I too recognised these behaviours in my practice and although I did not avoid all conflict, there were times when I should have been more proactive in dealing with such issues. I was concerned that a continuation of this practice could have negative implications for my leadership. My research data acted as a prompt for reflection and changes to be considered. I wanted to turn my feelings of a lack of confidence and my anxieties into more positive feelings and accept that there was nothing wrong in having to deal with conflict, although it is difficult and at times unpleasant. I took the view that conflict did not reflect myself and I looked to myself as the cause and then the solution of my concern (Obholzer 1996). I acknowledged my inner conflicts, those that reflected the contrast between my high expectations of others and reality, my uneasiness with certain colleagues because they did not behave in a manner which I believed was appropriate and my frustrations with how I saw decisions and priorities being made. I attempted to be less negative and cynical on certain matters. I also reminded myself that there were several positive comments from research participants regarding how I did handle certain conflicts and this gave me encouragement to extend this approach. I also clarified in my own mind about what constituted conflict. Given the nature of our organisation and colleagues, there would always be issues and differences of opinion. Subjectivity was a feature of our work and the judgement lay with deciding what constituted true conflict over the rough and tumble of our daily work lives.

The following extracts are from the second phase of research interviews:

“You seem to be more open to discussing problem areas since we had our last meeting, whenever that was, two years ago or so. I think you are clearer on what you want which helps a lot, not that you were unclear before, but sometimes we have been a bit confused as to who is doing what which has created a few problems. For instance, you have made it very clear now that the creative controller designs all of the promotional store material, whereas we as marketing managers were briefing the agency and ending up with different styles of graphics which had created conflict in the department and didn’t look too good when displayed in stores’

(Marketing Manager 2)

“One of the biggest things you’ve done over the last two years is built better relationships between Marketing and Retail. You and the retail director have tackled the problems and conflicts we had and the improvements have started with yourselves. I know that you’ve had problems in the past but by sorting these out then everyone else has seen this and followed your examples. Although there are still disagreements, it’s the way they are sorted out that is the big improvement now, so there is much less conflict and you must have come to terms

with how you handled this to see such a positive change. It's one less thing I've got to worry about now"  
(Chief Executive)

The phrases “more open to discussing problem areas”, “you are clearer on what you want” and “built better relationships” demonstrated a change in my attitudes and behaviour that improved a previously unsatisfactory situation. As leaders of our respective departments, the retail director and I established a new approach that “everyone else had seen... and followed your examples”. New behaviours in interpersonal relationships were founded, although this did take time. I moved through three phases (Bridges 2003) from endings (what had to be left behind) to the neutral phase (the time when I disengaged from the past and was yet to fully engage with the future) to new beginnings (where I started to grow in acceptance and confidence in the changed environment). This was a powerful example of the influence leaders can have on their colleagues by way of setting an example of how to behave - “the improvements have started with yourselves” and “you must have come to terms with how you handled this to see such a positive change”. The leadership act is in creating the environment and working practices and finding solutions to conflict and issues. Bennis (1989) and Mintzberg (1973) named conflict resolution skills as a prime leadership skill - the ability to mediate conflict and to handle disturbances under psychological stress. This example demonstrates that it is necessary for the individual to change his/her behaviour, values or frameworks for successful organisational change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). One has to become the change process in order to be successful (Eriksen 2008). To effectively facilitate organisational change, ‘I found that I had to see myself, accept myself and to be(come) the change I wanted to see’ (Quinn *et al* 2000 p.42). Paradoxically, as a so-called ‘change agent’ (Eriksen 2008), I found it difficult to face up to the issues within my own practice and seek change.

Problems and conflicts persisted although “it's the way they are sorted out that is the big improvement”. In truth, I cannot claim to have totally transformed my practice in these areas but I have moved significantly in the right direction which is meaningful (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) for me. I was continuously alerted to the signals of conflict. When problems became real, I dealt with them quicker before they became major issues. To do this, I had to overcome my natural tendency to avoid conflict and

to tell myself that I am capable and confident about resolving issues between individuals. I had also observed that I am more likely to raise issues with others, whereas in the past I possibly would have ignored them, hoping they would go away. This has had a beneficial influence on my own sense of responsibility and on my working relationships and ultimately, my leadership.

My research facilitated these improvements in my leadership. My insider position (Maydell 2010) in the inquiry enabled me to access the thoughts and feelings of my colleagues in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). It is unlikely that I would have otherwise done so. I increased my knowledge and enabled reflection to take place. By understanding the views of others and changing my attitudes, I was able to change my espoused and enacted behaviours in my practice. At the heart of my change was a change in aspects of my beliefs and interpretive schemes (Porras & Robertson 1992). Difficult situations continued to arise for me although I was more confident in dealing with them with the aid of revised behaviours that complemented other aspects of my identity and leadership. I considered that I had a core (Callero 2003) to my identity that had elements that were fixed and irreducible (Casey 1995) that included my values (Senge 1996) of fairness, honesty and loyalty. My research demonstrated how aspects of my identity had changed in response to habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and emphasised the social construction of my self.

### **Summary**

The constructions I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) from the research data depicted a change practice where I experienced change at three levels (Hatch 1997) – environmental via my social world (McNay 2000) and the changing customer needs (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010); organisational via structural, cultural and strategic changes; and individual via changes to my attitudes and behaviours. My autobiographical inquiry () enabled me to identify and reflect upon my experiences and give meaning to my change practice through my subjective interpretation of the data. I now have a better understanding of how change contributed to my leadership practice and how others were affected by my attitudes, values and behaviours. My analysis illustrated how change affected my leadership practice and my inquiry provided a valuable lesson for all those involved in change and leadership (Duncan 2004). My narrative revealed the contribution of others in the construction of my

change practice where the research data sourced from habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) illustrated the socially constructed (Alvesson & Robertson 2006) nature of my identity. The constructions I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) described the change situations I experienced - change and identity; change, leadership & management; preparing for change; organisational change in practice and self change.

Change was part of my postmodern world (Gergen 2000) and life in contemporary organisations is complex and frequently unpredictable. My research connected the context of my circumstances, my experiences and my identity (Sommer & Baumeister, 1998) and described change from a practitioners perspective that contributed to the limited knowledge about how to plan and implement organisational change (Burke 2008) from a senior managers perspective.

# Leadership

### Introduction

Leadership is a theme of our time yet the concept remains shrouded in a welter of definitions, journals and texts. ‘Writings about leadership have exploded, but we are not much clearer today than we were twenty five years ago about what is a good leader and what a leader should be doing’ (Schein 2010). Consequently there is no single definition of leadership and the field is open for contributions from a multitude of directions - ‘leadership without perspective and point of view isn’t leadership – and of course it must be your own perspective, your own point of view’ (Bennis 1992 p.122). From this interpretation, the concept of leadership leans towards a postmodern (Gergen 2000) one, which emphasised subjectivity and where localised and individual explanations are explored (Denzin 1993).

I viewed leadership as a personal concept based on a subjective interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) by an individual leader in their social context (Reed-Danahay 1997). My leadership and my identity are inseparable from the social, cultural and discursive fabric in which it is constituted (Adams 2007). Given the extensive nature of existing knowledge concerning leadership, I initially had doubts as to what my contribution could be. I hoped that my leadership experiences as a practitioner would form the basis of an inquiry where I could present an autobiographical (Smith & Watson 2010) account to extend sociological understanding (Sparkes 2000) and where the reader would share in my experience as author (Jones 2002). My understanding of my leadership practice was of importance to me and colleagues and practitioners could also potentially benefit from my narrative (Duncan 2004). I was the subject and object of the research (Ellis 2004), a unique position from which to explore my practice. As stories are written experiences my leadership became my story, one that I hoped the reader will feel is authentic, believable and possible (Ellis 1995).

Leadership is one of the three themes of my inquiry. The conceptual framework presented in chapter two described the interrelatedness of this concept with the



remaining two themes of self and change. The relationship between the themes is shown in Figure 14 with an emphasis on leadership as related to this chapter



Figure 14: Conceptual Framework Focussing on Leadership

Source: The Author

The extant leadership literature contributed to my inquiry and my reading of the literature included the theories of transformational and transactional leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). It was these that I focussed on in my inquiry and compared my primary research findings against in the analysis and theory development phases. Given the width and complexity of leadership theory, I restate the theoretical context for transformational and transactional leadership theory that was presented in chapter two (Figure 15):

<b>Leadership Theory</b>	<b>Theory Relevant to Primary Inquiry Findings</b>
Classical Leadership Theory	x
The Scientific Management & Human Relations Movements	x
Great Man Theory	x
Trait Leadership Theories	x
Style (Behavioural) & Traditional Leadership Models	x
Contingency (Situational) Leadership Theories	x
New Leadership Theories	x
Charismatic Leadership	x
Servant Leadership	x
Authentic Leadership	x
Complexity Leadership	x
Shared or Collective Leadership	x
E-Leadership	x
<b>Transformational &amp; Transactional Leadership</b>	✓

Figure 15: Theoretical Context for Transformational/Transactional Leadership

Source: The Author

My position as researcher and subject (Ellis 2004) allowed me to access my social world (McNay 2000) and reflexivity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007) to identify eight constructions that described the role of leadership within my practice (Figure 16):

<b>Research Constructions</b>	<b>Indicative Conceptual Framework</b>
Connecting my Practice to Transformational Leadership	Bass & Riggio 2006; Bass 1998; Deal & Kennedy 1982; Gergen 2000; Bourdieu 1977
Strategic Direction	Yukl 2002; Elder-Vass 2007; Obholzer 1994; Bass & Riggio 2006; Burnes 2004; Bass 1998;
A Focus on Customers	Drucker 1974; Bass 1998; Bourdieu 1977; Fineman 2000
Developing the Organisational Culture	Schein 1997; Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006; Pepper & Larson 2006; Hope & Hendry 2006
Developing Followers	Bass & Riggio 2006; Hirschhorn 2000; Bass 1985; Yukl 1998
Power and Influence	Yukl 1998; Allen <i>et al</i> 1979; Obholzer 1994; French & Raven 1959
Leadership and Self	Adams 2006; Bass & Riggio 2006; Ellis 1996; Atwater & Yammarino 1992; Manz 1986
A Hybridised Practice: Transforming & Transacting	Bass 1985; Zaleznik 1998; Evers & Lakomski 1996; Bass & Riggio 2006; Kotter 1990; Fairhurst 2009

Figure 16: Leadership Constructions & Indicative Conceptual Framework

Source: The Author

Each construction was analysed by integrating theory (Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006), data collected from habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and reflexivity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007). . I believed that my narrative based upon a robust interrogation of theory, method and data and the relationship between all three had the potential to be of use to others and have a wider benefit for leaders in many walks of life and positions. There was a ‘dearth of in-depth research on the development of leadership practice from a relational, social and situated perspective’ (Kempster & Stewart 2010 p.205) and qualitative studies of transformational leadership based on a subjective and interpretive epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) are to the best of my knowledge rare in the literature. My autobiographical inquiry will contribute to filling this gap.

### **Connecting My Leadership to Transformational Leadership**

In my day to day life at work, I rarely hear the word leadership spoken or seen in a formal or informal written communication. It does not appear to be part of our organisational language (Deal & Kennedy 1982). Our working lives are dominated by practical actions – we manage, we administrate and we control, an approach to work that is symbolically (Schein 1997) reflected in job titles of manager, administrator or controller. I found language was a lens for understanding aspects of organisational life (Deal & Kennedy 1982). This was the social context for my leadership inquiry where habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) encouraged colleagues to behave in ways that reproduced existing practices (Elder-Vass 2007). There have been efforts in the past to put leadership on the agenda in a more visible way through activities such as the internal ‘Customer Focused Leadership Programme’, the occasional leadership development course (Zaccaro & Palmone 2000) or 360 degree reviews (Atwater & Waldman 1998). These were well-intentioned but short lived in practice and not part of a longer term strategy for leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006). Unsurprisingly, I found the organisational culture reflected in my research interviews where colleagues generated only fifteen references to leadership, examples being ‘we had somebody who was leading us forward’, ‘you lead your own team’ and ‘he was the main leader’. Prior to the interviews, I had hoped that leadership would have been mentioned more frequently given that this was the theme under discussion. It is thought provoking to consider that after all that has been said and written about leadership, when the opportunity arises to discuss the concept the word is virtually unspoken. It would

appear that my research participants subscribed to the view that ‘leadership theories and models can appear unhelpful in relevance and application to practicing leaders’ (Turner & Mavin 2008 p.376). I have some sympathy. I found leadership to be an intangible concept and difficult to define. I had a sense that it was something we should be doing at work but I was not sure what the specifics were and leadership can become nothing more than personal belief or opinion (Evers & Lakomski 2000) or taken-for-granted practices.

This first construction is based on the direct references to leadership made by my colleagues in their interviews. I considered this was a good place to start bearing in mind the subject under discussion was my leadership. I then related these where possible to transformational leadership theory (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Schien 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). In so doing, I connected three perspectives within my inquiry - culture, practice and theory.

“In leadership terms, in giving people direction and giving them something to follow, you are very good. You set an excellent example of how to behave in business – how to dress, how to act – I think you are a very good role model. I think people will always consider you to be the fifth director”  
(General Manager)

“The fact that we now have a marketing department which functions and works is down to your leadership skills. I think that because you are liked and respected is also a good leadership quality. I don’t think that you have any issues in terms of your leadership –you are very deliberate and a well thought out person in the way you deliver a message – people respect what you are saying”  
(Trading Director)

“My opinion is that in terms of yourself and the other general managers I think you lead them. I think it’s kind of like the general managers and Richard and I feel that they rely on you for an awful lot in terms of setting up meetings, setting up working parties and it’s almost kind of you’re their backbone. It seems they have an awful lot of respect for you as a person and to look upon you for ideas and for the answers to things. I think you are at a different level to the rest of the general managers”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

“From our own point of view when you joined it was great because we had somebody who was leading us forward, although sometimes it became difficult because we came up against others who did not see it that way”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

“I think you lead your own team well - you set clear objectives, you brief people well so they know the background and objectives of the project or task. I think you communicate well and if you call a meeting or if there is a project to be done you clearly think of all the people who should be involved”

(Buying Controller)

“I think you are interested in learning, not just in the sense of further education, but learning from situations and developing your own skill and that's about interaction with people and I think you are in a sense a student of people and behaviour, trying to understand why people interact the way they do, which I think is part of leadership anyway”

(Retail Director)

“An important thing about being a good leader is the fact that you need to recognise the need for change before you do it, which is something you do”

(Trading Director)

“I also feel that you lead change in as much as you have to change your abilities and develop and constantly learn”

(General Manager)

The extracts reflected the views of my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) as expressed by my direct reports, peers and directors on my professional practice (Schon 1987). The use of phrases such as “your leadership”, “you lead”, “leading us” and “you are leading” indicated that I practised leadership as understood by my colleagues. In the absence of any criteria for how my colleagues defined leadership, I assumed it was along general lines of understanding taken from their social worlds during the course of their lives.

Participants referred to leadership in a generic sense - a particular theory or model was not mentioned, such as traits (Stogdill 1974; Yukl 1998), charismatic (House 1977) or transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006). I was not surprised by these omissions and participants' comments tended to reflect the social context of Peacocks with regard to the use of the word leadership and referred to behaviours and actions rather than theoretical concepts. Where leadership was quoted, the specific behaviours from my practice can be referenced to transformational theory. “Role model” and “respected” are included in Bass's (1998) idealised influence component of transformational leadership; “giving direction”, “clear objectives” and “communication” form part of the inspirational motivation component (Bass 1998); “new ideas” as part of intellectual stimulation (Bass 1998); “something to follow”

implies that others follow me (Bass & Riggio 2006); and “learning” (Coad & Berry 1998); and “change” (Tichy & DeVanna 1990).

Other comments were more critical and demonstrated that participants were not completely influenced by interview demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005):

“One of your characteristics that could be improved upon is also one of the characteristics which can be classed as part of being a good leader - your aloofness or the perception that you are aloof, although I think that with anybody who’s at the top of their tree they need to be slightly aloof”  
(Retail Director)

“I would say that without losing that sense of you being a leader, may be a little bit more warmth is needed”  
(General Manager)

“One of the things a leader should be good at is, I think, forgiveness. But if somebody makes a mistake in your area, I believe that you may be a little bit unforgiving. I think that you then tend to distance them”  
(Retail Director)

“Are you a good leader? I think you are because you are leading your team, you are doing a good job and everything is OK, but perhaps you need to become slightly higher profile. I do know what other people think about you and you have got a lot of respect - you are very calm, cool, organised and things gets done but actually if you put a bit more excitement into it they would become your initiatives, like visual merchandising and customer service”  
(Chief Executive)

“He’s very good at picking up trends. He’s not a dynamic leader, but you will never catch him out”  
(Focus Group A)

One participant referred to me being “aloof”, a reference to introverted leaders who seek out solitary time in order to process internally and this may cause others to perceive them as aloof and distant (Myers & Briggs 1941). My colleague suggested that being aloof was part of being “a good leader” yet at the same time suggested that I could improve this aspect of my behaviour – was I too aloof? There was a contradiction (Gergen 2000) here but perhaps the answer lay in the references to “a little bit more warmth is needed” and “a little unforgiving” in the subsequent two extracts. The remaining extracts referred in a leadership context to “a higher profile”

and “more excitement” being required and that I am “not a dynamic leader”. Reflecting, I recognised these characteristics as part of my identity. I can at times appear aloof, cold and unforgiving, even moody, but there are many times when my behaviours are the complete opposite. Is this why the more negative occasions become more noticeable? I noted a defensive tone in my narrative. Regarding ‘excitement’ and ‘dynamic’, I was more introverted than extraverted and I expressed my leadership in quiet forms (Badaracco 2002). I was more akin to a leader that was ‘humble and unpretentious; mild-mannered and shy and does not want to receive any public acknowledgment’ (Collins 2001). The origins of these behaviours are likely to be found in the social construction of my identity including childhood influences (Kets de Vries 1993) where I took the role of others (Mead 1934) in the form of my parents who were quiet people. My habitus (Bourdieu 1977) contributed to the construction of my identity. Consequently, I found the phrase “not a dynamic leader” rather paradoxical.

I detected a distinction in the language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) regarding the tangibility of certain transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) characteristics identified in my practice. For example, “giving direction”, “communicate well” and “lead change” are tangible actions when compared to “respect”, “how to behave”, “interested in learning” and “sense of being a leader”. Given the practical emphasis within the organisation, it was relevant to note that the softer side of leadership was recognised (Galpin 1996). These descriptions enabled my practice to be connected to aspects of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) whilst acknowledging the subjectivity of participants and my own interpretation of the data.

I noticed there were similarities between postmodern and transformational leadership theories. The social changes outlined in postmodern theory (Gergen 2000) including a dissolution of traditional bonds of social solidarity (Casey 1995) and increasing globalisation (Callero 2003) are echoed in the development of transformational leadership where radical changes have been instigated over the last thirty years by many western companies in their ways of doing business (Simic 1998) due to changing technology and competing newly industrialised countries. New approaches to leadership were needed as ‘the old social contract of long-term employment in return for employee loyalty’ was broken (Griffin 2003). Transformational leadership

theories also aptly described the social context (Reed-Danahay 1997) of the organisational setting I worked in – ‘transformational leadership provides a better fit for leading today’s complex work groups and organisations where followers not only seek an inspirational leader to help guide them through an uncertain environment but where followers also want to be challenged and to feel empowered’ (Bass & Riggio 2006 p.xi).

This construction reflected the few direct references to leadership made by research participants. Given the scope of the data collection activities, this was a very small proportion of the total data available and reflected the position of the concept of leadership in the organisational culture (Schein 1997).

The remaining seven constructions are based on the research data and all are associated with the concept of leadership. Research participants inferred these were aspects of my leadership practice, but they did not speak about leadership in these contexts. I assumed that they were intended to be connected to leadership, although I was careful that having accessed myself from the position of interview participants as an insider researcher (Maydell 2010) that I did not make any unfounded claims regarding my leadership practice.

### **Strategic Direction**

I considered strategy (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) was one of my central activities at work. I looked to the future, thinking about situations, scenarios and plans. In a changing world and marketplace, it was a part of my work that I enjoyed and whether described as strategy, planning or development, each had the same meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) for me.

When I joined Peacocks, there was no process for strategy (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009). It was very much ad hoc and based in individual departments. There was some coordination at board level, but then it tended to stay in the boardroom. People seemed to do the things they considered were right (and many of them were) so the opportunity was there to bring plans together and have a better understanding of what the business was aiming for. I began talking about strategy and planning and I found it difficult at first as some of the senior management appeared not to be interested or confused about what I was doing.



I felt there was resistance (Pawson 1994) from the board. My journal recalled an early meeting with the chairman regarding my plans for going forward. The meeting was going well until I hit the 'brick wall' when I spoke about 'strategic planning' in our efforts to focus more on our customers (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble 2010). I talked about marketing, customers, our culture, competitors and how we could discuss and plan our strategy to include all departments within the business. At this point the chairman said "are you saying that you want to run the buying, merchandising and retail departments?" My response was "absolutely not, I'm saying that in order to discuss and implement our future strategy, all departments need to be involved and work together and this is one way of doing that". The chairman then said "No Richard. Marketing is your area and that is where you need to concentrate your efforts. Let's move on". That was the end of the discussion.

I was annoyed with myself. Either the chairman had purposely refused to understand what I was saying or I had failed to correctly explain myself. My expert power (French & Raven 1959) had little effect. The chairman had the authority (Obholzer 1994) and it was clear that he did not consider these activities as part of my role (Hirschhorn 2000) and was not prepared to see me cross boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) to begin such work. I was confused as to my primary task (Obholzer & Roberts 1994) in the organisation. The poorly defined boundaries heightened my anxieties (Hirschhorn 2000). After the meeting, my emotions (Fineman 1993) were mixed. I felt very low and confused as to what they wanted from me. I wondered why they had recruited an experienced marketer with an MBA when strategy seemed not to be part of my role.

Undaunted, I approached this aspect of my work in a different way. I became more cognisant of who I was speaking to and when, in some ways creating multiple self's (Casey 1995) dependent on the social context. I toned down the language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) of strategy and marketing. The discourse (Foucault 1980) of professions can be a barrier to those who have less understanding of language that infers self-importance. I took a leadership position on my role as contributor to the strategy, facilitated through influencing (Yukl 1998) as my power source. I wrote the original vision and strategic positioning for Peacocks under the new management structure for a management buy-out in 1997. This work was built on a year later when

working groups based on a cross section of colleagues from different departments reviewed the organisational brand, vision and values and discussed strategies and plans that were later incorporated into new directions for the organisation. I was a central figure in this work. It was an exciting time for myself and the business and I felt empowered (Munduate & Medina 2004) and motivated (Bass & Riggio 2006). My identity was espoused and enacted in a leadership position based on a combination of authority (Obholzer 1994) and influence (Yukl 2006). Although ‘the essence of leadership is influence over followers’ (Yukl 1998), I found that I was also influencing sideways and upwards to my peers and directors in what became an organisation wide change initiative.

“You are very strategic. I think it's your role to be strategic but I don't think it's at the expense of anything”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

“It’s back down to this strategic thing. You are bloody good at the strategic side of it. You give time and decide when it’s appropriate to have an update”  
(Creative Controller)

Participant 3 “I’d say he’s good at strategy, very good strategist, very good organisational skills”  
(Focus Group A)

“Your leadership probably comes from your ability to define a strategy and deliver it”  
(Trading Director).

My work on strategy was viewed by my colleagues as a major part of my practice and my research made this clear to me. The literature detailed the relationship between leadership and organisational strategy (Yukl 1998; Abell 2004; Lynch 2009) and specifically transformational leadership (Waldman & Javidan 2002; Bass & Riggio 2006). From my cultures’ perspective, it was interesting that a research participant compared my leadership to strategy: “Your leadership probably comes from your ability to define a strategy and deliver it”. This suggested that conceiving and implementing a strategy was a visible demonstration of leadership, the type of activity that one would expect from a leader and that part of my practice involved working on strategy which was a transformational leadership role (Griffin 2003).

There is a connection here with the theme of change where organisational change cannot be separated from organisational strategy or vice versa (Burnes 2004). Strategy is one of the five dimensions of change (Pendlebury *et al* 1998). The concepts of strategy, leadership and change became integrated within my practice.

The remaining data from interviews regarding my involvement with strategy made no specific reference to leadership. This illustrated how a word and/or concept can be marginalised in a culture where leadership is represented by tangible taken for granted practices. Some may call these actions leadership, others may not.

The reference to “very good organisational skills” suggested that any transformational leadership characteristics I had were complemented by activities that were based more on transactional leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). This illustrated a key point in the literature that referred to leaders having a mix of both transformational and transactional leadership styles (Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). In one interview, a colleague used the word “vision”, a characteristic from the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership (Bass 1998):

“It seems that you are trying to understand how other people interact and what levers, in a sense, you can pull to get them to react in order to achieve something. That’s one of the fundamental parts of leadership isn’t it? The leader is somebody who has a vision and then has the knowledge and ability to get other people to believe in it and do the right things to achieve it and you seem capable of doing that”  
(General Manager)

In the extract, my colleague connected leadership to creating a vision and then inspiring (Bass 1998) others to believe in it. Creating a new vision is integral to transformational leadership (Kouzes & Posner 1988; Tichy & DeVanna 1986) where leaders ‘lead changes in mission, strategy, structure and culture’ (Griffin 2003). I interpreted the phrase “you seem capable of doing that” to mean that I had the potential to lead in this way, although there was no indication that I had actually done so. Another colleague seemed to agree that there was another step for me to make:

“You have got very strong views on what should happen in the business – what the objectives are, what the strategy should be, what the business has to do to succeed. What I don’t think we get is your inner vision of where he sees we should be going as strongly as we should”  
(General Manager)

It was true that I was frustrated at my level of involvement and I believed I had experience and knowledge (Schon 1987) to contribute to the strategic discussions. Interviews with my marketing colleagues sensed how I felt about my role and the context in which I worked on strategy:

“I think that you would like to be more involved in the strategic decisions of the business, which is where we should be, but I sense a frustration from yourself because the directors talk about what to do but you are not included, yet we are the ones who are coming up with a lot of the ideas and have to get on with what they say and so we should be involved more”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

Participant 1 “Richard has the technical skills, doesn’t he; he’s worked in marketing all his life. He is very strategic and wide in his views but he sometimes comes up against a brick wall”  
(Focus Group A)

Although I was not a director and at a lower level in the organisational hierarchy, that did not stop me feeling excluded when the directors held discussions and made decisions that concerned my department and aspects of organisational strategy that I considered formed part of my role. In my previous positions with other businesses, marketing had been the central function in the organisation. I was finding it difficult to adjust to the different culture (Schein 1973) at Peacocks. I kept hitting the “brick wall” I first came up against with the chairman. This feeling of being excluded from strategic discussions was mentioned in a focus group by a colleague. When I read this extract from the interview transcript it reassured me that others were frustrated as well:

Participant 3 “Well I think the strategy needs to come from the top so the belief really has to come from the board of directors but Richard, although he is working on a lot of the strategy and research, isn’t one of them so do the board really understand what he is doing and act on it – like the fact we need some advertising, but they won’t spend the money so things end up being put off or compromised rather than just going for what we really believe in, so Richard is up against this”  
(Focus Group B)

I wondered if these views from my marketing colleagues were genuinely their own or whether my views had been projected (Hirschhorn 2000) onto my colleagues through a leader-follower situation (Stech 2008). I was concerned with the comment regarding “does the board understand what he is doing and act on it”. I interpreted this to mean that my task was not clear and I lacked a context for taking my role (Hirschhorn

2000). This was contrary to my own understanding where I was clear on my role and there was clearly a difference within the organisation of my primary task (Obholzer 1994).

I became concerned as to whether I was performing my role in the way the directors were expecting. My frustrations were becoming evident to others although I was careful in controlling these given my leadership position (Sarros & Santora 2001). Inevitably I showing some emotion ‘to evoke emotional reactions in followers’ (Dasborough & Ashkanasy 2002) and my marketing colleagues became aware of my feelings and this was evident from the above extract. The data pointed to ‘followers identifying with the leader’ and ‘the leader providing meaning’ that formed part of the idealised influence component of transformational leadership (Bass 1998).

I found that my power was limited and my position in the organisation did not grant me the authority or right to make a decision (Obholzer 1994) over aspects of organisational strategy. My identity (Adams 2007) and position as head of marketing gave me a platform from where I influenced senior colleagues and in that context I practiced the essence of leadership (Yukl 1998). My professional knowledge (Schon 1974), experience (Obholzer 1994) and expert power (Yukl 1998) contributed to the act of influencing until a point came when my position on the organisation was superseded by the directors’ power, authority and position.

### **A Focus on Customers**

My approach to strategy was based on the marketing concept, defined as ‘the whole business seen from the point of view of the final result, that is, from the customer’s point of view. Concern and responsibility for marketing must therefore permeate all areas of the enterprise’ (Drucker 1974). The customer is therefore at the centre of the organisation. I assumed that one of my aims at Peacocks was to change the organisation to a more customer focused business. I found that talking and thinking about customers was not part of the organisational culture. In terms of language (Deal & Kennedy 1982), customers, like leadership, were never mentioned. One director referred to customers as “punters”, hardly a term indicating respect for those that shopped with us. This reflected how language described ‘forms of life’ (Wittgenstein 1953) in the organisation and organisational values (Smollan & Sayers 2009). As

someone who aspired to lead I observed these everyday realities (Kelly 2008) with interest. The culture was old fashioned, myopic and gave ‘lip service’ to customers (Christopher 1992).

“When you first started in the company, there was no market research, no idea who our customer was, how we should get to our customer. Some on the board didn't understand what marketing was all about, some that perhaps thought that they did. So you had a difficult situation - you almost had to educate the board as to what marketing was all about”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

The extract illustrated the “difficult situation” I had in achieving a balance between putting forward my ideas whilst not jeopardising the working relationships I was building with the directors and senior managers. It became clear that there were differing opinions as to what marketing entailed. For some directors it had a major contribution to make to the business whilst others thought it consisted of promotions and point of sale, important to some degree but not critical – “the point of sale can be changed quickly if it isn’t liked” was one view by a director.

Despite these issues, changes began to slowly happen. The following extracts from interviews with colleagues reflected my practice concerning customers:

“I think you are always thinking about the customer, you are very customer focused”  
(Trading Director)

Participant 1 “I always thought he was the main leader on the customer within the company - he’s the one that started all that”

Participant 2 “Yes definitely”

Facilitator “So define the customers he deals with effectively”

Participant 1 “Well I think he deals with internal colleagues very effectively and he really does strive for excellence in that and he pushes it down to us as well, and I think in terms of when he’s doing anything he always thinks of the end user who is the customer”

(Focus Group A)

“The customer service comes natural to you and you lead there. You are banging the drum, almost a rebel within your conformist way. And that is the internal as well as external customer – you believe in it” (Creative Controller)

“The Customer Service Group that you set up is a major initiative and I would like you to do everything you can on it and involve everyone in it and actually take responsibility to push it forward. And whether it’s internal, external of whatever, I really think that with that group you can launch initiatives that will get the customer message across to all of us”  
(Chief Executive)

“I think you are customer focused, it's good and better than anyone else because I think you do genuinely believe in it - and you ought to because you are in Marketing”  
(Chief Executive)

The view from my social world (McNay 2000) was that I had a clear association with customers and that I was “the main leader on the customer” in the organisation. I interpreted this as a transformational leadership position as part of inspirational motivation (Bass 1998) and change (Tichy & DeVanna 1990). Other extracts substantiated this view and corresponded with my own feelings (Fineman 1993) and passion about this aspect of my practice. I considered that I had begun to make a change to how customers were viewed in the organisation. The reference to “customer service comes natural (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) to you and you lead there” connected an aspect of my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) to leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) and to my practice (Schon 1987). This is a territory I felt comfortable in and I appreciated the “natural” comment as being a compliment. The Customer Service Group was a visible example of the customer concept in practice, a way I conceived to represent the theory in a practical way, and its value was noted by the chief executive who in general gave support to the idea. Despite this perspective, there were problems in working the customer message through the business. When the chief executive said to me in his interview “you do genuinely believe in it” I asked myself does everyone else *not* believe? Does the chief executive believe in it? His support would be vital in making the required changes. On reflection, I was naïve to think that everyone would be fully supportive of the customer concept with open arms. I had no grounds to assume that my initiative should become everyone else’s initiative. These thoughts were evident in the following extract from a focus group where the idea of ‘customers first’ was discussed. This was the concept I developed for communicating the importance of customers internally to all colleagues at Peacocks. The participants discussed some of the issues involved and the wider implications of such an initiative:

Facilitator “What are your thoughts on Richard’s phrase ‘customers first’? For instance is it an appropriate phrase to use with the type of philosophy that we want to ultimately bring to the business?”

Participant 1 “I think it makes sense because we should as colleagues always be thinking as a customer and everything that we deliver should be with the customer in mind, whether or not that’s the internal or external. It seems to be a simple way of putting over an important message”

Facilitator “So what commitment does the company have to customers?”

- Participant 2 “Well we have a customer service department but we probably put the least resources into that than any other area of the business. Apart from that there is the culture course, but that’s becoming a bit of a sheep dip really”
- Participant 1 “the stuff we’re doing with the research is helping isn’t it, I mean its starting to put together a picture about our customers and I think Richard’s idea is to put that over in this simple way for us all to think about the customers”
- Participant 3 “yes, the problem with us though is that are we just doing some sort of cosmetic job. Will the board and buying actually listen?. We all know what they are like”
- Participant 2 “It would be lovely for our Chief Executive to be sat here and let him hear this and tell him just how we see it”
- Participant 1 “The trouble is he would sit here and agree with it all and walk out of the room, have a five minute conversation with the Trading Director and you are back where you were before.
- Participant 3 “I think another problem as well which I certainly can see is that there’s the politics involved but there’s so many board room battles up there at the moment it’s unbelievable. It’s unbelievable”
- Participant 2 “Everything will be seen as marketing led and the buyers absolutely hate that. They hate anything to do with it being a marketing idea”
- Participant 3 “But unless there is a marketing drive from the top, customer thinking right at the top, not much will change.
- Participant 1 “Yes and the biggest problem that we’ve got is on the buying side and its ironic that we are reporting to the same guy. So that’s how we can’t influence anything. The people on the board are very operational aren’t they? They are all driven by their own departments, get the job done, but no one sits back and thinks about the business and what we need to do going forward. It’s all very short term and knee jerk reactions all of the time, not a lot of leadership really”

(Focus Group B)

The comments from my culture (Chambers 2003) resonated with my reflexivity. The idea of ‘customers first’ appeared to have been understood by colleagues and illustrated how a leader articulated their vision through the use of slogans and symbols (Schein 1997) and demonstrated the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership (Bass 1985). Whilst the interview noted the reference to “the research is helping”, a comment perhaps to be expected from a marketing colleague’s perspective, the wider picture was more problematic. The customer service activities were under resourced and the organisational customer culture course lacked credibility. This added to the scepticism of colleagues and questioned whether the business was serious about developing a customer focus. The extract above was meaningful (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) data and reflected the feelings of the marketing team who may have been influenced by my attitude to this issue arising from my position as their leader (Bass & Riggio 2006). The political (Allen et al 1979) situation vis-à-vis the directors and the buying department were also proving to be barriers to change (Kotter 1996).



As with many organisational aspects, politics (Allen *et al* 1979) played a key role in determining the outcome of situations and the customer initiative was no exception. I felt that the subject, and to a degree myself, became a pawn in a larger political battle between the directors. This was evident to many as the comments from interviews attest. My role was to encourage colleagues to think about customers so that they would be better informed to take relevant actions. Influencing was instrumental to my leadership practice although not always effective. I took this role without legitimate power (French & Raven 1959) and crossed boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000), risking criticisms and accusations of extending the remit of my role. I had support from individual senior managers but felt that I did not have the full support from the board of directors as a result of position power (Munduate & Medina 2004) and political manoeuvrings (Allen *et al* 1979). This in turn led me to question whether I had the confidence to fulfil this role. I felt isolated in terms of what I stood for in the business and I became conscious that I was relegating the ‘customer, culture, strategy stuff’ in my practice because it was adversely affecting my leadership. This affected how I approached situations and initiatives where I still held my own internal belief in the customer but my espoused behaviours became influenced by habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). My identity traits of avoiding confrontation and wanting to please others that originated in my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) also influenced my behaviours. My research had alerted me to this change in my behaviours and I acknowledged that I had at times compromised my leadership practice, a realisation that despite any attempt by myself to explain or rationalise why, was a disappointing admittance.

### **Developing the Organisational Culture**

My analysis of interview data produced several clusters that referred to aspects of my practice that I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) as transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) and this continued with my work regarding the organisational culture (Schein 1997; Senge 1996; Morgan 1997). This activity complemented my work on strategy and customers and created a triangular focus to my practice. Culture is one of the five dimensions of change (Pendlebury *et al* 1998). It is here that my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) became the force in my leadership practice as I placed

myself outside of my formal role (Hirschhorn 2000) and took up an organisation wide position.

The following extract described a retrospective account of the organisational culture at the time I joined Peacocks and how I began to change aspects of how we approached our work:

“I think that I was a lot more conflict orientated in those days, but you showed us ways to approach it, moving away to what we have now with the culture programme in terms of talking directly to the person you have a problem with and try to resolve it, whereas before we’d try and drop that person in so much trouble that they went or ended up being bollocked. You were the new boy, everybody else was still sticking to the old ways of doing things”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

My approach was different to the dominant conflict driven culture. I offered a noticeable contrast to “everybody else” that included coaching, an individualised consideration component of transformational leadership (Bass 1985). The values of trust, honesty and fairness (Senge 1996) within my identity (Giddens1991; Adams 2007) became visible as part of my practice. I began to examine with my team how we could improve the way we worked together and with other departments:

“We created our Marketing Charter to improve how we worked. This included practical actions such as ‘answer telephones promptly and clearly’, ‘attend meetings on time’, ‘don’t keep visitors waiting’ and ‘take ownership of communications whether telephone, email or verbal’, based on principles such as respect and teamwork’  
(Personal Journal).

The practical emphasis of the marketing charter symbolised (Schein 1997) a change in our working practices based upon the values (Senge 1996) of respect and cooperation. The charter was extended a year later as part of a wider initiative to change the organisational culture (Chambers 2003) through a ‘Customer Focussed Leadership Programme’ and I became very involved in the specific activities and as a senior manager supporting the initiative. In the context of the culture change at Peacocks, interview participants gave the following comments regarding my practice:

“One of your strengths is that you are very proactive in changing the culture of the business. You’ve been a role model for lots of people. In lots of conversations you’ve been cited as the only one that’s grasped this. So I think in terms of bringing about change and the management of change in the business, you are probably the best example in the company”  
(Trading Director)

“You lead by example within the culture. I think possibly that you still stand alone, as we have said before about your leadership, I think you are anxious to do the culture, and it’s almost as if people are saying you would expect Richard Antrum to be leading the culture” (Chief Executive)

I found these two extracts to be powerful statements for their content and also who said them. My line director and the chief executive both illustrated aspects of transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) in my practice. I found it ironical that I appeared to have taken a stronger leadership position regarding the culture than my two senior colleagues and in particular the chief executive, the person who’s support would be vital for the success of the initiative. The comments regarding leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006), role model (Avolio & Bass 1991) and change (Kotter 1996) substantiated the transformational leadership aspects of my practice.

As I reflected on the extracts and their meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) I felt a sense of pride (Fineman 1993) in my work with the culture programme and I recognised a naturalness (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) in my behaviours. My socially constructed values (Senge 1996) of trust, respect, honesty and fairness were principles that were part of my daily practice, not just when the culture was being discussed. I extended the remit of my functional role (Hirschhorn 2000) to an organisation wide role, one that did not have any formal position or powers. My data illustrated the connection between leadership and culture (Schein 1997; Senge 1996; Morgan 1997) and leadership and change (Bass & Riggio 2006; Burnes 2004) and thereby connected culture to change (Schein 1997; Burnes 2004).

There was a mixed level of support for the culture change in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) with members of senior management being openly critical and making progress difficult. It was if a distinct sub-culture existed (Morgan & Ogbanna 2008) that where there was a divide between espoused and perceived values. Although culture had been called a system of shared meaning (Pizer & Hartel 2005), this was very debatable (Martin 2002) at Peacocks. I remember feeling uneasy about my profile and I wondered if this had become *my* project rather than the wider senior management group. Whilst the extracts below reiterated the positive aspects of my

practice regarding the culture development, they also revealed doubts and changes within my own behaviours that would lead me to question my own cultural practice:

“I was going to say about the culture that you have embraced it - you’re a real culture man, you work to it don't you? I think it might be good sometimes to point it out to other people”  
(Buying Controller)

“I think they (other general managers) acknowledge your perceived superiority in knowledge, if you like your role modelling. I think on the one hand they see you as somebody who lives, breathes and backs the culture but at the same time they don't know how to approach you on the culture to follow you”  
(General Manager)

“I know you want the culture to succeed and you are disappointed if it doesn't succeed or it doesn't follow at the pace you would like it to. You were frustrated at the lack of speed whereas other people could see that a degree of change was happening. I think you show frustration with your peers if they are not coming along with it; I don't know whether someone aspiring to be a leader would try to get to grips with those individuals. I think possibly that if you felt secure enough then maybe you would have taken on the others and said - look this is not happening, you are not supporting the culture”  
(Retail Director)

“If you look at the culture course, you were very close to what was trying to be achieved, but I sense that in the last 4/5 months that you have become very disillusioned. I think a lot of the initiatives we started, like our charter, had a big effect. We all sat down and discussed and agreed it. And the overall culture, you were the champion of it, enthusiastic about it, positive, and because of the way the board treat it now, you've lost your enthusiasm. Maybe you've got more cynical”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

“I would say that when I first joined the company and in the first few months you were probably the best example, in fact you perhaps in many ways are still the best example, of a general manager who is fully supportive of, comprehends and tries to apply the values of the business to the culture but I detect a certain degree of cynicism creeping in and to be honest I can empathise with that because I feel that the directors perhaps aren't either as sincere as I may have once perceived them to be or have allowed it to become less important in their own behaviour”  
(General Manager)

Reflecting on this data, my identity (Adams 2007) became central to the analysis. The aspects of myself that propelled my efforts with the culture initiative contrasted with those that sowed the seeds of my doubts and cynicism as I became disappointed with the progress that was made. I had not realised at the time that this was so obvious to others, an observation my data had revealed. Perhaps I contributed to the eventual diminishing focus of the project - if Richard Antrum is dissolutioned then what about

the rest of us? Comments such as “it might be good sometimes to point it out to other people”; “they don't know how to approach you on the culture to follow you”; “you show frustration with your peers”; “if you felt secure enough then maybe you would have taken on the others”; “become very disillusioned”; “you've lost your enthusiasm” and “maybe you've got more cynical” are in hindsight disappointing behaviours. Although a fellow general manager understood my frustrations, this powerful data is an indication that I reduced my efforts in this area and this became noticeable to my colleagues. I was uncomfortable when my values (Senge 1996) of honesty and integrity were not shared in the business. My sense of identity that was partly determined by my values clashed with organisational values (Pepper & Larson 2006) that appeared not to change. I became paranoid that others would be able to sense when my personal views and opinions were at odds with the organisational position or be able to detect my disenchantment with the way decisions were being made. Virtually all senior management considered the culture change initiative was a diversion from their regular jobs and there was a lack of leadership by the chief executive to combat these attitudes and behaviours. The culture initiative languished because it was imposed as a ‘lay-on’ (Fairhurst 2009). The continuing indifference within my habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) to support the culture change had created a backdrop from which I felt I was becoming too isolated in my views and this affected my wider working relationships. The socially constructed organisation (Morgan 1997) that I worked for first enabled and influenced my practice to develop the culture and to recognise me as a leader of change. This support then changed to a more negative position and habitus (Bourdieu 1977) became a source of social and situational pressure that adversely affected my practice. My beliefs and values proved ineffective in the face of indifference and a lack of senior support. I was not able to make the changes I had hoped for, this being the true test of a leader (Bass & Avolio cited in Bass & Riggio 2006). I found that organisations do not have cultures, they are cultures and that is why they are so difficult to change (Georgiades and Macdonell 1998). The organisational culture did not lend itself to being adaptive (Kotter & Heskett 1992) and the leadership style was highly transactional (Bass & Avolio 1998).

My experiences concurred with research that raised doubts on the possibility of managing culture or the effectiveness of change mechanisms when cultural change programmes are imposed (Hope & Hendry 1995). Position and power are

instrumental for initiatives of this kind. My position gave me a certain level of legitimate power (French & Raven 1959) that enabled me to change the way in which my department worked and my influence and authority contributed to this. When I extended my role (Hirschhorn 2000) and crossed boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) to the wider organisation and relied on influencing to facilitate change, I required the support of those with a higher position and authority. Influencing as power (Yukl 2006) had a limit and I was restricted in seeking a transformation when positioned lower in the organisational structure. Although the literature states transformational leadership may be exhibited by anyone in the organisation (Burns 1978; Bass & Riggio 2006), the outcome would depend on how successful the potential leader is in influencing those in higher positions in the organisation. My experience in developing the organisational culture demonstrated transformational leadership behaviours that not totally fulfilled as a result of the limits to my influencing powers and my eventual demotivation and in the directors reluctance to pursue the initiative with the vigour and leadership that was required.

### **Developing Followers**

The development of followers is at the heart of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio 2006) with followers being referred to in all four components of transformational leadership – idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Bass 1985). In contrast to theory, the idea of a follower was not mentioned in any of the interviews, even by members of my own team. This questioned the relevance of the leader-follower (Bass & Riggio 2006) paradigm although participants commented on several aspects of my practice that reflected the concept of the follower from the literature (Bass 1985 *et al*). This gave meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) to the data and revealed how habitus (Bourdieu 1977) had interpreted the concept of the follower in other ways that reflected the culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) and language (Wittgenstein 1953) in the organisation. These were expressed in terms of managing my team, individual consideration and empowerment.

There were several comments from non-marketing colleagues that referred to the relationship I had with my team:

“I have never heard any of your team raise any criticisms, never heard anybody say he didn't tell me this or I didn't know that. They all seem to be able to come and talk to you so clearly you have an open door policy. I think you have camaraderie if you like. Everybody knows their role. So I think on a team basis I think you are a very good leader as such”

(General Manager)

“I think you are good with your team and I think you are very articulate with your team”

(Chief Executive)

“You seem to manage your people quite well; I don't know how much coaching you do within your area. You are a guy who believes very much in self-help, empowering.

(Buying Controller)

Extracts from senior managers observing the marketing department from an external perspective appeared to have reasonably positive comments to make that referred to communication ((Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010), clarity of role (Hirschhorn 2000), coaching (Bass 1985) and empowering (Munduate & Medina 2004). The comment “on a team basis I think you are a very good leader” connected my leadership to team performance (Bass 1985). The reference to “able to come and talk to you” related to the individually considerate leader who ‘listens effectively’ (Bass 1985). The extracts made reference to teams that presupposed some of the characteristics of effective team performance (Zaccoaro & Klimoski 2002) were in the process of being established. These included integrating individual actions and performing in complex environments. Role definition (Hirschhorn 2000), communication (Kotler 1996) and morale (Fineman 1996), in reference to “camaraderie” appeared to be at acceptable levels. Good as far as the comments go but an external view only gives a superficial view as to how an outsider perceives a group to work. This may conceal internal issues that only members of the relevant team are aware of although members of the team in the focus groups were quite positive:

Facilitator “Do you think he champions your cause?”

Participant 2 “Oh yes. Very much so, yes, definitely”

Participant 1 “He always does say that he feels he'd got one of the stronger teams in the company” “He's very supportive of each individual and gives power to your elbow”

Participant 3 “He fights for the department”

(Focus Group A)

Facilitator "Do you feel that cliques have developed - I am thinking about the way people feel they are treated - other people treated more beneficially than others?"

Participant 1 "No I don't see that, I think Richard treats us all very equal, that's how I see it and even down to, down to everyone in the department, there's nobody that Richard would kind of not have any time for"

(Focus Group B)

The individualised consideration component of transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006) provided the theoretical reference for the following interview extracts:

Facilitator "What about developing you as individuals - do you feel he copes with developing you. Does he do it to start with?"

Participant 2 "It's mainly down to you"

Participant 3 "He likes you to go in and say what you want"

Facilitator "What about developing, does he come to you and say right I want you to take on this responsibility because I think it would be good for you"

Participant 2 "Yes, he's good individually like that and we have always got a new project to work on being in marketing"

(Focus Group B)

"I think certainly my development has increased a great deal since you joined this department. You know things that I wouldn't even think of in the past. I would say you are supporting me a great deal"

(Marketing Manager 2)

Transformational leaders pay attention to each individual follower's needs for achievement and growth (Bass 1985) and individual differences in terms of needs and desires are recognised. The quotes "it's mainly down to you", "he is good individually" (at developing), "my development has increased", "you are supporting me" indicate an empowering (Munduate & Medina 2004) approach that I adopted and hoped that these were genuine feelings by members of my team and not said just for the interview in the context of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005).

"I think that he strives very hard to build teams. I think he identifies clearly the structure and the qualities and the skills that he wants in his teams. I think he will support them all the way. But I also feel if anyone does not come up to his high standard then I think he would support them so far but then might have to take more serious action because he would have tried but in the end the performance of the whole team could be in jeopardy and he would not want that"

(Focus Group A)

"I think individual teams within the department are working well but I don't think in terms of the whole team we are probably as close as we used to be but I think that is down to the team"



growing. I would say that yes we have got a team out there but they are more individual teams than one whole team”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

The references to “anyone does not come up to his (my) high standard” and “the whole team...not as close as we used to be” were less positive comments and signalled potential problems for the future. These were two aspects of my practice that I was unaware of and demonstrated the value of the comments from my culture as part of the research inquiry. Another question was posed regarding giving feedback:

“What I have noticed in the last couple of weeks and I don't know whether or not it's any reflection on you speaking to people but you gave me your feedback on the point of sale guidelines that went to stores that were wrong. That's one of the first times that you have really addressed me like that and it was a bit of a shock really, but I felt it was a good thing because I went out actually feeling that's something that I should have been aware of and it shouldn't have got to the stage where you'd actually pick me up on it but at least I can go back and make sure it doesn't happen again”  
(Marketing Manger A)

Participant 1 “Richard doesn't always give the feedback that he might do, because sometimes you actually hear or you will spot a mistake yourself and you think - why didn't Richard tell me about that”  
(Focus Group B)

There appears to be an inconsistency in my practice with an example of constructive feedback but then there are occasions when this is not the case. This type of behaviour might be mirrored in the following extracts regarding decision-making:

Facilitator “Do you feel that you are left out the decision-making processes?”  
Participant 1 “No I find the opposite”  
Participant 3 “I have never known him say - right we are doing this and that's it, he always involves people in the decision-making but sometimes that's where he could get a different view from two people and he will agree with both and that's sometimes where this 'can't make a decision' time comes in”  
(Focus Group A)

“You involve the team in decision making in the majority of time. It's like the advertising you are obviously thinking about it and then asked our opinion as to - do you think it's the right thing to be doing. If we had to save a 100 grand you obviously had in your own mind where you would take it from but actually getting a joint decision on and we all thinking the same way”  
(Creative Controller)

The research highlighted inconsistencies in my practice that I should be aware of as there was the potential for my practice to be affected. The extracts suggested that

constant effort was required as the social environment and business needs changed. My data prompted reflexivity that recognised my practice behaviours were susceptible to moving through cycles in response to a changing habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and its' influence on myself through changing circumstances, people and events. Attempting to achieve consistently high standards of leadership can only be enacted and espoused when all aspects of my identity were aligned. This would not always be the case. I recognised characteristics of my identity in the behaviours observed by my colleagues – respect, calmness, determination, fairness, honesty, too relaxed at times and in danger of not meeting my own high standards – characteristics that I can relate to my parents identities and my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993).

Empowerment (Munduate & Medina 2004) was a major factor in developing followers and is a product of individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation, both components of transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). My inquiry revealed the extent to which I empowered and suggested possible reasons to explain some practice issues. These were concerned with the degree to which I empowered (Munduate & Medina 2004) others and the resultant conflict (Hamlin & Jennings 2007) that arose.

The following extracts from interviews revealed participants views on how I empowered others and raised questions that would need to be addressed:

Participant 3 “I would say he’s a very fair person, you know, he lets you get on with your job, empowers us I suppose. He doesn't come in the office constantly – asking what are you doing now, this that and the other”  
(Focus Group A)

Participant 2 “I would say he’s good at empowering people rather than delegating because there’s a difference isn't there between the two. He’s quite happy to delegate work, which is pretty straightforward, but he’s also keen for you to develop in our role and empowers you to be able to do that. It’s quite an open brief really and you can develop that brief yourself which is why he’s good at empowering”  
(Focus Group A)

“Then, empowerment is equally good, everybody gets on, a goal to head for, everyone feeling a sense of being able to get on with it. If you strike a problem, nine times out of ten you can resolve it because you know which direction to go in”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

The extracts confirmed that empowerment (Munduate & Medina 2004) was evident within my practice and formed part of transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006). Within the data, the analysis revealed the following observations that prompted my reflexivity. The description “he’s a very fair person” connected to my identity, value (Senge 1996) of fairness and illustrated self as part of a leadership. I felt comfortable with empowering others and I considered it a natural behaviour. Research participants spoke about “empowers”, “empowering” and “empowerment” and this solidified the presence of this behaviour in my practice. The extract “he’s good at empowering people rather than delegating because there’s a difference isn’t there between the two” is relevant to how my colleague interpreted empowering and delegating which the literature also defined as being different (Conger & Kanungo 1988). I related empowering to transformational leadership and delegating to transactional leadership, a distinction that reflected the differing criteria for the leadership styles. The extract “keen for you to develop in your role and empowers you” indicated a connection between empowering and the development of a follower. Team spirit was present as evidenced by “everybody gets on” and “you can resolve it” suggested this participant felt empowered to resolve issues that may arise as part of their empowerment (Munduate & Medina 2004). Overall, the value of empowering produced benefits for those that were empowered in terms of motivation and achievement of goals (Bass & Riggio 2006). However, there were issues in my practice as the following research extracts indicated:

“You do empower your people quite well - I think in some cases you need to get your hands a bit dirty as well”  
(General Manager)

“You empower people to do their jobs, which can be both a negative and a positive. You delegate and communicate which is good. You sit back, let things get on, until you show some interest or take some action. And that’s good. The down side is it seems as if you’re not showing interest. But then you’ll ask where are we with a project and that’s the balance that needs to be achieved”  
(Marketing Manager 1)

Participant 1 “I agree one hundred per cent that he does empower people. He lets people control their own jobs but I would say in some circumstances he can perhaps go too far in that direction. Some times because he does that, he fails to grasp

the nettle when it needs to be grasped; when there is a problem he still tends to let things drift on rather than tackle it”

(Focus Group A)

“On empowering people to do their job, you are a bit hands off, in other words you let us get on with it. I would say this is a strength but it can sometimes give the impression that you like to let things sort themselves out which can give the impression that you don’t like or avoid confrontation”

(Retail Director)

When I heard (in the one-to-one interview) or read (from the focus group transcript) these comments, I recognised the behaviours in my practice and these became powerful statements for me to reflect upon. The early parts of the extracts confirmed my empowerment (Munduate & Medina 2004) although the latter extracts revealed some criticisms - “you need to get your hands a bit dirty as well”, “you sit back”, “seems as if you’re not showing interest”, “you are a bit hands off” and “fails to grasp the nettle”. The comments from both marketing and non-marketing colleagues suggested that I had gone too far in empowering others. The data revealed behaviours that were akin to laissez-faire leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) which is negatively related to all of the components of transformational leadership. I had slipped into a part of my identity as a result of my naivety and wanting to please others, aspects of my personality that originated in my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993). Similarly, the comment “can give the impression that you don’t like or avoid confrontation” has been a lifelong trait. I viewed empowerment on the basis that subordinates should manage the negatives as well as the positives as a result of being empowered, including resolving their own difficult situations or conflicts. On reflection I now see that I was using this approach to avoid my own involvement in confrontation. My research made me more aware of being accessible for advice, support and communication between relevant parties, balancing empowerment with some involvement and control, especially for those that needed more support. Straying into laissez-faire leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) is not my preferred option, but occasionally this may happen given some aspects of my identity (Giddens 1991; Adams 2007). Empowerment involved giving away some of my legitimate power (French & Raven 1959) that I could take back at any time. This left me with the notion that empowerment is dependent on the social context and identities of those involved. Empowerment can be viewed as another form of delegation where senior management promote the idea but in reality they retain the real power.

There were other implications for me as a result of empowering my team. I was constantly anxious as a result of not knowing every detail of our activities and I questioned my self-confidence in dealing with these situations. I did not want to be caught out if asked a question and the more I empowered the more I felt vulnerable. Have I been brought up to date this week, today? Has anything happened that I haven't been told about? What if I'm asked about this in a meeting? I became paranoid about the number of 'what ifs' that could occur. I experienced the 'great worry', as described by Turner and Mavin (2007), behind the scenes of the 'performance' of leadership and emotional vulnerability about processes of being a senior leader. I realised the need to make some changes. I introduced new approaches into the way I empowered my team, including more regular communications, clearer boundary and role definitions, more contact with other senior management on marketing projects and more visible support for members of my team. I also recognised my anxiety and paranoia and attempted to be less worried about its presence, not ignoring it, but relegating it in my mind to a level that was more acceptable.

### **Power and Influence**

It was inevitable that the subject of power would be raised in some context during the course of my inquiry although the actual word was never spoken in any of the research interviews. Power is defined as the capacity to influence others and the essence of leadership is influence over followers Yukl (1998; 2002). Leadership is thus the exercise of power (Michelsson undated).

Power and its effects contributed to my practice in the contexts of my functional role as well as more personally. These included empowerment (Yukl 1998; Bass & Riggio 2006) of my subordinates; influencing (Yukl 1998; 2002) colleagues at all levels; organisational politics (Allen *et al* 1979) including subtle and more obvious alliances and agreements; conflicts (Hamlin & Jennings 2007) of my own and those in my social environment; and the impact of organisational boundaries (Morgan 1997), taking a role (Hirschhorn 2000) and group working (French & Vince 1999).

I set out a narrative to illustrate my experiences of power based on the development of a new brand and store presentation design for Peacocks. This example of power in habitus (Bourdieu 1977) is based upon my journal notes and reflexively described my experiences in my culture and looked deeply at self-other interactions (Reed-Danahay 1997).

In my role (Hirschhorn 2000) as head of marketing I was responsible for the strategic (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) and day-to-day aspects of the design and brand image of Peacocks' stores. It was a struggle in the sense that we have hundreds of stores that were in need of a refit. I remember standing in the middle of our Dalston store in north London which is one of our largest and thinking how dull and unexciting the interior was. Given the changes in the environment (Gergen 2000) market and with customers (Moran & Brightman 2001) looking for more value, I knew that we needed to review our brand and store presentation design if we were not to fall further behind our competitors (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). A couple of days later I mentioned this to my director who seemed quite keen and we arranged a meeting with the chief executive to find out his views. My vision (Kouzes & Posner 1988) was that this was going to be a major change (Kotter 1996) going forward, not a tinkering at the edges. By the time we saw the chief executive, I had prepared a short PowerPoint presentation to run through the main points. I initially using my position power (Munduate & Medina 2004) as head of marketing as well as my expert power (French & Raven 1959) in retail marketing and consumer knowledge as a justification for my proposals. I also felt that my personality (James 1975) and a positive feeling (Fineman 1993) in my role (Hirschhorn 2000) contributed to my confidence.

Although the chief executive was initially warm to the idea, he quickly moved to talking about the barriers (Kotter 1996; Pendlebury et al 1998) to change, obtaining support from the main board, explaining it to city analysts and the costs and time involved. I had seen him like this before and I thought that he needed some reassurance. I said it would be a step by step approach (Kotter 1996) trying some new initiatives in a few stores at first and then seeing what worked, whilst there would be on-going work developing a new brand logo and store design. I moved from a position of expert power (French & Raven 1959) to influencing (Yukl 2006) when I was talking to my two directors and used three different forms of influence – rational

persuasion, inspirational appeal and personal identification (Yukl 1981). I felt comfortable and confident, allowing the more natural and positive aspects of my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) to be expressed. I knew both colleagues had the authority (Obholzer 1994) to override any of my powers given their higher position in the organisational hierarchy. I was pleased when they agreed to go forward with the proposal and for me to work on the next stage and develop a full plan. The decision had been as a result of power existing between social actors rather than residing with the actors themselves (Hatch 1997). My identity and personality had influenced my senior colleagues and for a few minutes, I felt that I was a transformational leader (Bass & Riggio 2006). When Burns (1978) stated 'we must now see power and leadership not as things but as relationships', I knew what he meant. My power was my influencing.

A year on from the meeting, the resulting change project had become the centrepiece of my work. I had also led and managed my department and consequently been under more pressure than normal. I reminded myself that I had instigated this initiative and brought the workload on myself. But I relished the role. It was challenging as well as exciting and involved significant changes in modernising the business. The moment of transformational leadership had been a good experience and had been repeated several times in presentations and meetings concerning the project. I realised that moments like these were infrequent - the need to address day-to-day activities accounted for most of my time. As the momentum built, more departments and colleagues became involved in the project. In general, support from the board was there but I knew that privately some directors and senior managers were very sceptical. I had the feeling that they were biding their time before giving their full support, a position that manifested itself in the less than desired cooperation I received from their respective departments. The new branding and store design had been tested in the Bridgend store and sales had seen a significant uplift with a corresponding positive pay-back period given the costs involved. A further three stores were tested with the same encouraging results. The board subsequently agreed to adopt the new concept in all new stores going forward, a significant decision bearing in mind we opened around thirty news stores each year. Additionally, a programme for refitting our existing stores was also agreed, a programme that eventually saw over three

hundred stores refitted over a three year period. This proved to be a turning point in the development of Peacocks.

From the early stages, I had been organising the weekly meetings of the project team, a meeting that initially had around three or four colleagues and grew over the year to around fourteen in the group, reflecting the width of the project in the organisation as other departments became involved. As the project progressed, I observed a change in attitude with some of my colleagues. At the beginning, the sceptical views were quite widespread and some possibly saw me overstepping my position power (Munduate & Medina 2004) and crossing boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) by questioning the status quo and potentially viewing me as a threat to their power bases (Pfeffer (1992)). This was not a board inspired initiative and one or two directors and their senior managers were wary of such a move. This might affect the balance of power in the organisation, with a successful initiative giving my director more power. As the year progressed and the project became a reality and was proving to be successful, the sceptics became more involved. I began to be marginalised by others in terms of my involvement. Other departments and their senior managers and/or directors began to make decisions outside of the project team, to report on progress at board or weekly trading meetings. I would find out about decisions or changes from third parties in other departments. Discussions would be held in board meetings where, because I was not present, the views of other directors were becoming more dominant. I found that I had little support from my own director for the issues I was facing. The project began to get tangled up in the wider politics (Allen et al 1979) of the board and their power struggles and my director was taking much of the credit for the initiative at board level. As the success of the project had become clear and any risks of being associated with the project had diminished, more senior managers became involved. The transformational leadership experiences I previously had were gone. I was still involved but the retail director had been given more responsibilities for the project and I found myself virtually reporting to him for the on-going development of the project. My emotions (Fineman 1993) at the time were mixed in the sense that internally I was annoyed, feeling that I had been unfairly treated and let down by my director, yet externally I maintained a positive manner, keeping my true feelings to myself, putting on an act (Goffman 1959). I continued to contribute in terms of marketing inputs into the project, but by then a process had been constructed to



manage the new stores and the refit programme. My strategic work was completed and the tactical aspects became the dominant work area. Several colleagues who became associated with the project enhanced their own personal positions - I never received any recognition for the transformation I had initiated and pioneered.

My reflections on these experiences prompted a range of emotions (Fineman 1993) concerning my involvement in the new brand and store design. I felt proud that I had initiated this major change (Kotter 1996), one that was borne out of the strategic (Yukl 1998; Lynch 2009) and visionary (Kouzes & Posner 1988) elements of my leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006). I had a sense of achievement and I traced the reasons for pursuing the initiative to aspects of my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) that included determination, optimism and commitment. I realised these factors alone would not have been enough. To facilitate change I required a power base to influence others (Michelson undated) and to persuade the directors to agree to the initiative. My power base was constructed from position power (Munduate & Medina 2004), expert power (French & Raven 1959) and influencing (Yukl 2006), a fundamental aspect of the 'idealised influence' component of transformational leadership (Bass 1998).

I compared my experiences to the literature. Most theories of transformational leadership depict a leader's direct influence over individual followers or at the corporate level by a chief executive (Yukl 1999). From my relatively lower position in the organisational hierarchy I influenced in all directions including directors, peers and subordinates. This led me to question the definition of followers. I had mistakenly assumed literature references to followers (Yukl 1998; Bass & Riggio 2006) implied they were subordinates of the leader. My experiences made me realise that followers could be anyone in the organisation that had been influenced by a transformational leader (Yukl 1998), an act that I had achieved.

At the same time I was disappointed that I had seen an erosion of my contribution to the project as it progressed. I welcomed the contribution of others despite the political (Allen *et al* 1979) motivation where senior colleagues were in positions of power to block or change actions (Kotter 1985). My position power, expert power (French & Raven 1959) and influencing (Yukl 2006) were overridden by their higher position in

the hierarchy. I felt that I had been side-lined. I could not understand how this had happened. I thought this initiative which had transformed Peacocks would have resulted in some form of promotion or other acknowledgement of my contribution. I was naïve and trusting of others. I saw power exert its presence in colleague's behaviours as the risks associated with the initiative became fewer over time and others became involved when at first they were reluctant to do so. I was de-motivated and confused. My influencing had stimulated something to happen (Morriss 2002) and my leadership in envisaging a new brand and customer experience proved to be a turning point for Peacocks. Perhaps I exaggerated my role (Hirschhorn 2000) and experienced an illusion of influence (Pfeffer & Cialdini 1998).

As well as the strategic changes I was involved with, I also encountered the repercussions of power during the course of day-to-day life at Peacocks that had implications for my leadership. These were illustrated by members of my team during the research interviews:

“The buyers have too much power. I know they are responsible for buying the products, so it's an important job, but it seems that whatever they want, they get. They don't understand what other departments do. They want to design their own packaging and don't have any idea about how to do that. They only seem interested in just their bit and not the total picture. We only find out at the last minute about new ranges. That's really annoying, because the buyers know what they are developing months in advance, even if we just see the storyboards. Despite many requests, it's still the same. It always means we are pushed against our deadlines”

(Marketing Manager 2)

“Store equipment is the classic example where we need to sort out who's doing what. We've got Steve in Marketing on new equipment development and Jack in Maintenance responsible for maintaining the equipment in stores. But the stores all go to Steve for their maintenance, because he is more knowledgeable about what's going on. Jack always asks him before he sends items out. So why they don't work together? It's because the two directors who are responsible for their departments won't give up any of their areas. This causes a lot of problems with the stores”

(Creative Controller)

Although these comments were not specifically about myself, they are located in habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) and illustrated some of the issues concerning inter-department working relationships which by implication reflected on my leadership. They represented my experiences in my social world (McNay 2000) where I practiced my leadership and raised aspects of power and its effect on others in the organisation. Peacocks, as a large and complex business was characterised as highly

diverse and interdependent with many opportunities for power dynamics (Michelson undated). In the first extract, “the buyers have too much power” is said with meaning by the marketing manager on the basis that the buying department was seen as uncooperative, given special treatment and made the work of marketing more difficult. Reflecting on this issue, I know that I have attempted over the years to find solutions to these problems but made little progress. The reasons for this lie in the organisational reporting structure. My director was also responsible for the buying department and having been a buyer, his loyalties lay there. His power emanated from his ability to control resources that included his senior managers and his authority (Obholzer 1994) derived from his position in the organisational hierarchy. Despite a degree of lip service from my director, nothing was ever fundamentally changed to improve the working relationship problems and I found that my position power (Munduate & Medina 2004) and influencing (Yukl 2006) proved to be ineffective. I was frustrated that I had not been able to significantly change these patterns of behaviour and disappointed with the superficial support from my director. These issues were examples of working attitudes and behaviours that the ‘Customer Focused Leadership Programme’ culture initiative was designed to resolve but were undermined by a director who should have been more supportive. In the second extract, the comment “the two directors who are responsible for their departments won’t give up any of their areas” is an example of how political power (Yukl 1998) and position power (Munduate & Medina 2004) had an adverse effect on an operational aspect of the organisation.

The marketing department worked with other departments in the organisation who contributed towards several customer facing activities that were marketing’s prime responsibility. Needless to say, many views were spoken regarding how each department saw their input being incorporated. Buyers had a view as to how their product ranges should be presented in stores to customers. The retailers worked with the various materials and equipment in the stores and had a view as to the operational effectiveness of the activities marketing delivered to them. The estates department designed the store building infrastructures and had a view as to how that was best achieved. Marketing had views on all of the preceding points and the responsibility to coordinate and implement agreed activities. This environment raised issues of working in groups (Bion 1961), roles (Hirschhorn 2000) and boundaries (Hirschhorn

2000). Some departmental contributions were legitimate and part of their role but many others were not. Politics (Allen et al 1979) was very evident. Subjective (Rose 1998) views caused frequent discussions and raised emotions when contrary positions were taken. This was particularly acute when a colleague was able to influence the director from an 'informal' position and they did not have a direct responsibility. It was just their view. Where one colleague thought that a fashion graphic was good, another colleague would disagree. After discussions and often escalating the debate up the hierarchy, power (Pfeffer (1992) would be eventually used to resolve the issue.

I spent time with my team and other departments discussing, explaining and at times defending our actions or future proposals. This communication was part of transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) but I did not see anyone being transformed. The issues remained, the attitudes remained and the struggles remained. I reached the level of my powers and had to be content with the view that 'this is how we work'. This was our culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998).

There were positives during the course of our work and departments could work together in a pressurised environment but I cannot help think that so much more could have been achieved. My dominant thought is that groups and individuals competed amongst themselves for power and resources and had different opinions, values and priorities that instead of being harnessed in some way became the basis for poor inter and intra departmental relationships and conflict. Some colleagues wanted to change and others are reluctant to do so (Pawson 1994). There were cliques, favourites, political alliances and clashes of personality. I have no doubt that I have been part of this and I wondered if this was the right environment for me to work in. There were many aspects of my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) that were not compatible with this organisational culture (Schein 1997).

I viewed power as omnipresent and unavoidable, a manifestation of how individuals in groups and organisations behaved. It was constantly at work, invisible for the most part but then observed in the context of decisions, issues and conflict. My position as head of marketing gave me position power (Munduate & Medina 2004) and expert power (French & Raven 1959) that enabled me to fulfil my responsibilities, yet even

here my use of that power was subject to those above me in the organisation and those that had the ability to informally influence those in power.

Influencing (Yukl 2006) and empowerment (Conger & Kanungo 1988) elevated my practice at times to be transformational (Bass & Riggio 2006; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990), two aspects of how power that had their origins in my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007). In transferring some of my power to others, my power changed and created anxieties for me, requiring strategies to be developed to enable me to cope with the 'not knowing' or 'lack of control'. I generated the illusion of being in control and so defended myself against anxiety. There were several ways this manifested itself – talking to colleagues to explain points of view, measuring 'things' in the hope of explaining and justifying, behaving as we think others would expect us to, not to be emotional and being rational. To counteract anxieties, attempts at eliminating uncertainty and legitimising the use of power were seen in organisational titles, hierarchies and positions. I also experienced how power manifested itself through the discourse (Foucault 1980) of organisational life. Power was visible through actions such as information distribution which signalled control by those who had the information and anxiety by those that did not. The language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) of business and other forms of discourse (Foucault 1980) were manifested in which colleagues were involved in meetings, job titles, who had a PA and who did not, where people sat in meetings, who is 'in' and who is 'out' of the various formal and informal groups, political alliances and pre-meetings of those in power. I found myself questioning my position and abilities when faced with politics (Hope 2010), conflict (Hamlin & Jennings 2007) and power (Pfeffer (1992) in what I considered were the politically based motivations of others. Reflexively I considered others may have thought that I have behaved in similar ways and may have had the same feelings about my actions.

I constructively interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) social interaction and relationships at work as involving some exercise of power. Power became part of performing my role (Hirschhorn 2000). This could be my power or a colleagues' power. My research opened my previously held interpretation of power as a negative (Yukl 1998) phenomenon. I associated power with being self-serving, unfair or manipulative and blamed power when decisions did not go my way, I attributed that

to someone using their power against me. These negative connotations are associated with the mis-use of power (Obholzer 1994). I realised during my inquiry that influencing (Yukl 2006) was my power and I was able to use this in a constructive way. I had also seen decisions where power was used in my favour. I became more balanced in my appreciation of how power can be a positive phenomenon. I had not fully considered until I reflected on my data that I was in a position of power and could be seen as using my power against others. I became more cognisant of how I exercised my power/influence in my relationships with colleagues.

### **Leadership and Self**

There are innumerable theories and texts concerning leadership and associated literatures that are set in the context of organisations, yet there is a dearth of in-depth contextualised research on leaders in situated leadership practices (Kempster 2009; Lowe & Gardner 2000). Seldom does mainstream leadership research reveal the internal emotions, doubts and feelings associated with being a leader (Turner & Mavin 2007) despite the suggestion that the challenges of knowing, showing and remaining true to oneself have never been greater for leaders (Gardner *et al* 2005).

In this section I moved the analysis of myself towards leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006) and my practice at work where I am positioned in the organisation as a leader. As researcher and subject (Ellis 2004), the data from my social world informed me of the extent to which my identity is considered to be fundamental to my leadership practice. As an insider (Maydell 2010) in my research and given the working relationships I had with my interview participants, I was able to draw upon discursive sources and self-other talk (Ybema *et al* 2009) to generate rich descriptions (Geertz 1993) of myself in the context of a leadership inquiry. In several extracts there was a direct link between the themes of self and leadership, an example being:

“In leadership terms, in giving people direction and giving them something to follow, you are very good. You set an excellent example of how to behave in business – how to dress, how to act – I think you are a very good role model”  
(Buying Controller)

This extract illustrated how my behaviours and appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995) contributed to my leadership. This is not to say that “giving people direction

and something to follow” was solely dependent on “how I dress, how I act” (Goffman 1959). I may dress and act in another way and still give direction and something to follow. It was interesting to note that my culture (Bass & Riggio 2006) connected aspects of self to leadership that it was a relevant comment in an interview that was concerned with my leadership practice.

There are several existing theories concerning leadership of the self that focus on behaviour and cognition (Neck, Manz, Godwin 1999; Manz 1986) and the strategies a person uses to influence and improve his/her behaviour (Sims & Lorenzi 1992). I understood the relevance of these models as a result of my inquiry whilst at the same time I explored other perspectives of self-leadership based upon my data and reflexivity. I believed that being aware of one’s self was a pre-requisite for self-leadership and my inquiry contributed to this through my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992) and assessing my strengths and weaknesses based upon my subjective interpretation.

The constructions earlier in this chapter emphasised the pivotal role of my identity (Adams 2006; McNay 2000; Callero 2003) in connection with my leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). I was inquiring into the question ‘who leads the leader’? Personal values, traits and characteristics were identified by interview participants and these in many cases were those that the literature referred to as being appropriate to leadership. Examples were a clear sense of purpose, value driven, strong role model; high expectations; self-knowing; perpetual desire for learning; strategic; effective communicator; visionary; listens to all viewpoints (Bass 1990a; Cox 2001; Stone, Russell & Patterson 2003; Tichy & Devanna 1986). I posit these same values, traits and characteristics that were applicable for the leadership of others were equally applicable for the leadership of myself. This concept is positioned at the centre of my identity and the idea of ‘leading myself before leading others’ is an approach that I aspired to in my leadership practice. I asked myself “do I practice generally accepted leadership skills in my own self-leadership?” “Do I have a vision for myself, do I influence myself, am I honest and trusting to myself; do I listen to myself through reflection; do I change my attitudes and values; and am I motivated?” My research prompted these questions and has in part provided some answers. I was aware of how I could influence myself in terms of self-leadership, a concept that was relevant in my leadership practice with others. The concept followed that of Manz (1986), who describes self-leadership as a comprehensive self-influence perspective

that concerned leading oneself toward performance of naturally motivating tasks as well as managing oneself to do work that must be done but is not naturally motivating. In some respects, this dual description complemented that of transformational and transactional leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006). My self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992) had been re-vitalised and I attempted to produce an honest assessment of myself, an act of leadership in its own right, one that may lead to self-actualisation (Maslow 1943) in the future. In this respect, I followed Bennis (1998) who identified management of self - knowing one's skills and deploying them effectively - as a competence of leaders. Based upon the data from my culture and reflexively I knew that I did not possess all of the ideal characteristics of a leader. Integrity (Bass & Riggio 2006) and charisma (Conger & Kanungo 1998) were not commented upon by my colleagues for instance, although I considered these were not a negative factor within my self-leadership. I found that in times of difficulty and in experiencing stressful situations, it was my 'I' (Mead 1934) and self-concept (Gecas 1982) that guided 'me' through adverse and challenging circumstances. When I lacked confidence and even questioned my own position within the organisation, it was important for me in how I responded and led myself through those periods. When the role of marketing was questioned, when my contribution was not recognised and when others were promoted and I was not, it was my self-leadership and identity that maintained the standards of behaviour that I considered a leader should enact.

My reflexivity contributed significantly to the shaping of my self-leadership and to identifying and unearthing my beliefs and assumption's. I regarded 'thought self-leadership' (Godwin, Neck, Houghton 1999) to be a similar concept to how I interpreted the role of reflexivity where self-dialogue (what we covertly tell ourselves) and mental imagery (the creation and, in essence, symbolic experience of imagined results of our behaviour before we actually perform) can be addressed. I also noted a distinction in the literature regarding self-leadership (Manz 1986) and self-management (Sims & Lorenzi 1992). This represented a microcosm of the extended debate regarding the differences between leadership and management (Kotter 1998) that connects to the next construction.



### **A Hybridised Practice: Transforming and Transacting**

I considered that my practice was a hybrid of transformational and transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) as a response to the descriptions of my leadership and management behaviours by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) and my reflexivity (Adams 2007). My analysis identified aspects of my leadership practice that were comparable to transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006). These felt to be moments of transformations rather than the core of my practice. There was a temporal dimension to my transformational leadership that was contingent on the social context, my emotions (Fineman 1993) and anxieties (Gabriel 2000) at the time as I went about my work in meetings, visiting stores, with colleagues in my and other departments or in more informal settings around the office. In some of these situations transformational leadership was enacted through influencing (Yukl 2006) and an agenda for change as part of my behaviours. Yet these occasions accounted for a relatively small proportion of my role (Hirschhorn 2000). Most other activities could be described as transactional leadership (Burns 1978). This style is associated with some of the more basic aspects of organisational life (Bass 1985) including meeting department objectives, ensuring colleagues are supported and that the budgets and financial criteria are met. Underpinning these functions were the administrative and often bureaucratic aspects that need to be dealt with. This involved structuring, controlling and rewarding and what can be described as ‘mundane behaviours’ (Nadler & Tushman, 1990 p.86). My personal journals and diaries were full of notes that referred to the minutia of organisational life and included arranging meetings, sending emails, preparing presentations, monitoring costs, sending meeting action points, informal chats, answering queries from stores, responding to other colleagues requests for information, attending other colleagues’ meetings, signing invoices and expenses, colleague appraisals - the list is seemingly endless. One of the interview participants had also commented on this aspect of my practice:

“I feel that they (general managers) rely on you for an awful lot in terms of setting up meetings, setting up working parties and it's almost kind of you're their backbone”  
(Marketing Manager).

These day to day activities, keeping on top of administration and complying with procedures were part of what I did in my work and became the foundation that the

higher profile, more transformational activities were built upon. My data also pointed to aspects of my practice that were weaknesses where transactional leaders did not take corrective action for mistakes, a feature described as passive management by exception (Bass 1985). More serious was laissez-faire leadership (Bass 1985) where the leader avoided his/her responsibilities. I was aware that I had slipped into these modes at times but had not challenged myself as to why. The fact that it was raised by colleagues in the interviews made me realise the effect this behaviour had on others, an example of the usefulness (Bochner 2002) of the research process. In the context of leadership theory, I viewed the description of laissez-faire as a *leadership* style as an oxymoron and contrary to any sense of the concept of leadership. I was confused as to why it was included in a leadership theory.

The differences between transformational and transactional leadership (Bass 1985) were compared in the literature to differences between leadership and management (Zaleznik 1998; Kotter 1990; Rost 1998) where the transformational style is considered to be leadership and the transactional style to be management (Bass 1985). These descriptions are interchangeable and I used data from one context for the other. In two interviews with colleagues, the different styles of leading (transformational) and managing (transactional) were mentioned:

Participant 2 “In terms of management and leadership, I think they are two completely different things – I would say that he leads the team rather than manages. He trusts people who are managing particular areas to get on with their job and he doesn’t check every minute about everything we are doing”  
(Focus Group A)

“I would certainly say that you lead more than manage which is a good thing because if you didn’t there would be total chaos”  
(Marketing Manager 2)

Although short and with just two mentions from the wealth of data collected from interviews, the comments were incisive as they illustrated precisely the question that has given rise to the extensive debate in the literature – is leadership different to management? (Zaleznik 1998; Kotter 1990; Rost 1998). The phrases “he leads the team rather than manages” and “you lead more than manage”, described how my colleagues had observed leading and managing in my practice and then defined these as different concepts – “I think they are two completely different things”. Although the

descriptions transformational and transactional (Bass & Riggio 2006) had not been used by participants, they can be substituted for ‘leads’ and ‘manages’. The comments were notable because they used the word leadership which is not at the forefront of the organisational language (Deal & Kennedy 1982). The value of the data also lay in establishing connections between my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998), practice (Schon 1987) and the literature (Bass & Riggio 2006). I moved to the heart of my practice in response to the leadership/management paradigm. The following framework represented the hybridised nature of my practice that blended leadership and management attitudes, values and behaviours (Figure 17):

<b><u>Leadership</u> Transformational</b>	<b>My Practice</b>	<b><u>Management</u> Transactional</b>	<b>My Practice</b>
Leading	✓	Managing	✓
Establishing direction	✓	Planning & budgeting	✓
Aligning people	✓	Organising & staffing	✓
Produces change	✓	Produce short-term results	✓
Influence relationship	✓	Authority relationship	✓
Leaders & followers	✓	Managers & subordinates	✓
Do the right thing	✓	Do things right	✓
Focus on people	✓	Focus on systems & structure	✓
Rely on trust	✓	Rely on control	
Emphasise values & goals	✓	Emphasise tactics and systems	✓
Have a long term view	✓	Have a short term view	✓
Ask what & why	✓	Ask how & when	✓
Challenge the status quo	✓	Accept the status quo	
Focus on the future	✓	Focus on the present	
Develop visions & strategies	✓	Develop detailed timetables	✓
Take risks		Avoid risks	✓
Inspire	✓	Motivate	✓
Use people influence	✓	Use position influence	✓
Operate outside of rules		Operate within rules	✓

Figure 17: My Hybridised Practice

Source: Kotter 1990; Hickman 1998

Virtually all had been part of my practice at some time and to varying degrees. Although the literature specifically referred to ‘distinct differences’ between leadership and management (Zaleznik 1998 & Kotter 1990) and Rost (1998) contended that the two concepts were fundamentally different, I had diverse and contradictory views (Denzin 1993) and was not convinced that these differences existed in my practice. My colleagues identified a difference that I found hard to understand. Perhaps their views were based on common preconceptions of leaders and managers where the latter is viewed as less exciting and not charismatic. Or it may be

that my identity characteristics of trust and honesty placed me in ‘high esteem’ and as a leader (Zaleznik 1998) rather than in the role of the organisation’s ‘taskmaster’ (Zaleznik 1998). Alternatively, colleagues may have interpreted some of my behaviours in a leadership context where I viewed these as managerial. The point of the discussion became blurred as participants’ interpretations and subjectivity was merged with my own. The value of the debate was diminished as multiple interpretations (Denzin 1993) were inevitable and expressed through language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) that I filtered through my position as researcher.

I reflected on the hybridised nature of my practice (figure 17) and considered leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) and management (Storey 2004) were integrated in my practice and complemented each other to a much greater extent than I first thought, akin to the yin and yang of the social and emotional considerations (leadership) and the technical aspects (management) (Mulligan and Barber 1998). For example, I could not lead and ‘establish direction’ without thinking about the management aspects of ‘planning and budgeting’. One is required to facilitate the other. It is claimed leadership ‘produces change’ and managing ‘produces short-term results’ – it is inevitable that change, no matter how small, will have played a part in those results. Often leadership is needed to instigate short-term activities as well. The framework also suggested that only leaders have the trust of their people and can inspire them, whereas managers cannot. According to Burns (1978), transactional leadership involves values such as honesty and fairness that were represented in my practice. I wondered why these were not applicable to transformational leadership as well.

I found it difficult to discern all of the differences between management and leadership (Evers & Lakomski 1996) and be so prescriptive in specifying extremes. In my experience, there is a middle ground for many of the characteristics. I reflected at what point leadership became management (or vice versa) in my practice. Bass (1985) explains that transformational (leadership) and transactional (management) leaderships are distinct but not mutually exclusive processes and some leaders may use both types at different times in different circumstances. My difficulty is knowing when one characteristic moved from one extreme to the other. As I went about my work, I did not think “am leading or managing?” I performed both leadership and

managerial roles where the styles were situationally and temporally dependent. I led in situations where I influenced change, as in the case of the new brand and store designs, and also managed with activities such as arranging meetings, monitoring finances and people management.

Management activities accounted for the higher proportion of my working week in terms of time. It seemed as if there was a language (Pondy 1978) game between understandings of leadership and management, where words are assumed to have multiple meanings and interpretations (Tierney 1996). There are many phrases in the literature that promote the differences between leadership and management - 'managers are orientated to stability and leaders are oriented toward innovation' (Yukl 1998); 'managers are concerned with how things are done and leaders are concerned with what things mean to people' (Zaleznik 1977); and 'leadership is the use of influence and management is the use of authority' (Katz & Khan cited in Rost 1998). The phrases 'managers do things right' and 'leaders do the right things' (Bennis & Nanus 1985) inferred that managers do not 'do the right things' and leaders do not 'do things right'. These distinctions only reinforced the language confusion around leadership and management that emphasised differences between the two concepts. Language use became a lens for understanding certain aspects of organisational life (Fairhurst 2009). My research revealed different interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and the definitions of leadership and management from the literature are less meaningful to me. This reflected the local (Etherington 2004) social context in which my inquiry was situated where leadership was a concept that was not visible within my working life and not part of the organisational language (Deal & Kennedy 1982). Leadership was not a discursive phenomenon at Peacocks. I often think back over a week and try and remember if the word was said. It usually wasn't. The talk is about management, administration and controlling rather than leadership, reflected in the construction of job titles, where 'manager', 'controller' or 'head of' is preferred to 'leader'. This cultural (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) context that I worked in reflected the relationship between language and action that underpinned an interpretive approach to leadership research (Kelly 2008).

In describing the social context and its relationship with leadership, I realised that because the words were not spoken this did not mean that leadership did not happen.

Leadership as it was espoused and enacted at Peacocks was represented by taken for granted activities such as budget meetings, team meetings, a chat over coffee, giving presentations, dealing with complaints, sending e-mails and generally getting on with daily work. These were the sort of practical activities that rendered leadership visible to those in the organisation.

My research data and literature prompted me to reflect upon whether I was capable of leading and the managing. Two research participants commented that I displayed both leadership and management behaviours, albeit in their view skewed more to leadership. Kotter (1990) stated that it was unusual for one person to have the skills to serve as both an inspiring leader and a professional manager and in large organisations the two distinct roles are even more difficult to assimilate in one person, and the tendency is to set leadership skills aside in favour of managing the workplace. These contrasting views illustrated the differences in perspective of a specific local culture with general theory. The reality of my social context and my role (Hirschhorn 2000) is that I combined leading and managing within my practice at work. My leadership was to the fore when I was influencing (Yukl 2006) others to change the brand and store design. Once a decision had been made to proceed, my management (Rost 1998) became dominant in the form of organising the implementation of the project. This emphasised the interactive nature of leadership (transformational) and management (transactional) in my practice and reflected Evers and Lakomski's (1996) view that it was difficult to discriminate between the two styles

As look back on this chapter, I reflected on my narrative and realised that I appeared to have been constructing a case to say I am a transformational leader. In reality, the analysis revealed some characteristics of this style and this would not be sufficient to claim that this leadership model represented my practice. There were other aspects of transformational leadership that were not part of my practice as evidenced by the comments from my culture (Schein 1997). I was not described by colleagues in research interviews as charismatic (Bass & Riggio 2006) or inspirational (Bass & Riggio 2006) – the words were not spoken and there is not a suggestion that I fit these criteria. Regarding charisma, although Bass (1985) stated it was a necessary component of transformational leadership, several writers have proposed that a leader can be transformational without being charismatic (Yukl 1994). This illustrated the

multiplicity (Gergen 2000) of interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) that could be drawn from the social world and emphasised that there is no one answer (Gergen 2000) to what constituted transformational leadership characteristics within my practice. Other characteristics such as sense-making, changing the way people think and passion are missing from research participants data. I felt that these were part of my practice at times, but they were not spontaneously recalled by my colleagues during our interviews. My data revealed aspects of my practice that I interpreted as transformational leadership:

“I gave people direction; something to follow; I was a good role model; I defined a strategy and delivered it; I was liked and respected; I led others forward; I led change and the culture; I focused on customers; I was looked upon for ideas and answers; I set clear objectives; I briefed people well; I communicated well; I was calm, cool, organised; I got things done; I had a vision and the knowledge and ability to get other people to believe in it; I understood people and I was willing to learn” (sourced directly from interviews with colleagues). I also has a number of weaknesses pointed out to me - “my aloofness; more warmth needed; sometimes unforgiving; tended to wait for ideas from others; not a dynamic leader; needs a slightly higher profile; not 100% clear at times”

(One-to-one interviews & Focus Groups)

Similarly with transactional characteristics identified in my practice, there was a mix of behaviours and values that were the foundations of my role (Hirschhorn 2000). If I could not fulfil the managerial aspects of my work, then my position would become untenable. I had different interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and meanings resulting from my experiences of transactional-type activities where I applied the attitudes and values of a transformational style. Activities that were classified as transactional/managerial, for example, submitting the paperwork for a capital expenditure project would receive the same level of attention as a more transformative activity, such as a presentation to the board on a major proposal. The transactional functions enabled strategic changes to be made.

As my analysis weaved between data and reflections, I was aware that the social context I worked in was a contributory factor in how my practice manifested itself. Bass and Riggio (2006) referred to the degree to which an organisation is based on transformational or transactional leadership, including the openness and control of information, the centralisation or decentralisation of power and the bases of expert and legitimate power. Contextual understanding of the organisation is essential if the

postmodernist is to make sense of leadership (Tierney 1996). I viewed Peacocks as more transactional than transformational with power and information being closely held by those in senior positions and where position power overrode expert power (French & Raven 1959). It was not the environment where transformations flourish. It was certainly not the environment where leadership models and academic concepts could be articulated. Perttula and Xin (2005) claimed transformational leadership is weaker where traditional cultural values are more predominant and this was relevant to my social culture. In this context, my identity and characteristics became the catalyst for the transformations that I endeavoured to pursue. These followed a close pattern to the transformations that Griffin (2000) identified leaders made, including changes in mission, strategy, structure and culture, albeit in my situation these did not fully materialise as a result of my lower organisational position.

I reflected on my identity and whether I was capable of being a transformational leader. The literature indicated that a relationship exists between personality and transformational leadership (Hautala 2005) with extroversion, intuition and perceiving preferences being the key characteristics as well as positive, optimistic and emotionally balanced, able to cope with stressful and complex environments and more likely to be risk takers (Bass & Riggio 2006). As I considered myself to be introverted and not a risk taker, I immediately ruled myself out as being transformational, although I am reasonably intuitive, perceptive, optimistic and emotionally balanced. My scepticism lay with the distance between generic models and my specific context and reality where it is unlikely I would meet all of the objective criteria. Similarly, theorists (Popper & Mayseless 2003; Avolio & Gibbons 1988; Avolio 1994) have reviewed the personal backgrounds and early experiences of transformational leaders, demonstrating that parents, family, school and work were important determinants in influencing transformational leaders. My reflexivity has unearthed personal thoughts and schemas (George & Jones 2001) that have a bearing on my practice and in many ways are not compatible with a transformational leadership style. These include a lack of self-confidence more times than I would wish for, a feeling of wanting to please others at all levels in the organisation and an avoidance of confrontation. Positive and negative events have also shaped my identity, with for example my recovery from a serious illness as a child being a positive event that gave me inspiration and determination and on the negative side, a redundancy that affected my life in a serious



way for a relatively long period of time. The identity characteristics that my culture identified in my research are those that I valued - trusted, a listener, respected, a role model, fairness, empowering, understanding, an influencer and loyal – can be seen as part of transformational leadership characteristics. Of more importance are the meanings that I and others have attributed to my identity. As Leithwood and Bass (2000) acknowledge, there are difficulties in providing evidence for transformational leadership which depend on how people interpret what they see. My experiences led me to agree with Evers and Lakomski (2000) who stated any claims to leadership are nothing more than personal belief or opinion. It was my view that considered my practice was a hybrid of transformational and transactional leadership based on my constructivist interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) of the descriptions of my leadership and management behaviours given by my culture and reflexivity.

### **Summary**

My research confirmed some of my prior beliefs and revealed new perspectives regarding leadership that I was not aware of. These perspectives were borne through my experiences in my social world (McNay 2000) and reflexivity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007). At the beginning of my inquiry, I had considered that transformational and transactional leaderships (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bennis & Nanus 1986; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) were theories that were closest to my practice. In reality, my experiences illustrated similarities and differences to the literature and I recognised some theoretical characteristics in my practice but not others. I reflected on the nature of leadership itself. By taking a postmodern (Gergen 2000; Callero 2003; Adams 2007) approach, leadership became open for my subjective interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and redefinition, prompted by habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) with its ‘multiple and competing realities’ (Tierney 1996).

I began my inquiry confident that I would discover much about my practice and leadership as I avidly reviewed theoretical leadership models. As my research unfolded and as I neared the end, I began to wonder whether leadership was even a valid description for my practice.

I reflected on my reasons for undertaking my research. Initially I thought that I was a leader and I sought to validate this proposition on the basis that being a leader

sounded to be the right thing to be. Leadership was the mantra that appeared in the wider business and academic environments and I interpreted this scenario to mean that I should have knowledge of leadership and to be equipped for my organisational role.

At the end of my research I have changed my opinion. My inquiry opened up a different way of thinking for me, one that questioned all assumptions about my practice at work. I now considered that even if I could claim to be a leader, I would not describe myself as such. It implied something more than the reality actually was. Leadership did not fit with my self-identity (Adams 2007) and how I wished myself to be. I could not claim to be a leader in the fullest sense of the concept because I am not a leader. It would be egotistical and narcissistic for me to do so.

I focused on the knowledge and meanings I was able to create and construct for myself given the data from my social world, my knowledge of the things I do and say at work and my reflections on the reasons for my behaviour. Whether this can be called leadership is a secondary issue and a subjective one. Leadership literature had played an important early role. Understandably, no one had researched or written about my leadership or had asked the people that I worked with about my leadership or indeed had asked me what I felt about my leadership. I was unable to locate my practice. I opted for the safety of transformational and transactional leadership theories (Bass & Riggio 2006) as I considered these to be the nearest models to my practice. I now understand that leadership theory has a place, but this is someone else's theory, generic models that covered a multitude of situations and could not hope to be specific to myself and my social context. Transformational and transactional leadership theory was based upon positivist methods and my interpretive narrative method (Kelly 2008) has provided another perspective. The meanings in the literature were someone else's meaning and my autobiographical narrative has enable me to understand what counted as 'leadership' (Fairhurst 2009).

### Changing Leadership

“..it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new”

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1513

#### Introduction

In this final chapter of my thesis, I bring to a conclusion the discussion and analysis from the previous three chapters and integrate the themes of self, change and leadership to formulate a theory that represented my interpretation of my practice at work. I restate the purpose of my research, integrate the research constructions identified previously into a holistic view of my practice, introduce the concept of ‘changing leadership’ and outline the contributions to knowledge that my study has made to theory and to practice. The meaning that I attributed to the knowledge obtained from my autobiographical inquiry was important to me and I hope to others in similar positions.

There were several elements of my thesis that combined to create a unique study. The conceptual framework provided one of the foundations upon which my inquiry was built with a review of the extant literature regarding self (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007), change (Yukl 1998; Kotter 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003) and leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bennis & Nanus 1986; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006). This knowledge gave a context to my study and enabled my research data to be analysed. In a sense, the world ‘out there’ was brought into my world and the heart of my inquiry that was conducted during a period of significant organisational change. Throughout my study, reflexivity (Adams 2006) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977) both contributed to the construction of my identity, although it was difficult to ascertain which was the most influential. The contribution of my social world (McNay 2000) during my life was evident in the comments from research participants. An autobiographical narrative (Smith & Watson 2010 ) was a valid and appropriate research methodology to share my study with others and to write purposefully so as to make a difference (Ellis & Bochner 2003). In a change and leadership context, relatively few studies have employed interpretative,

autobiographical methodologies or examined the subjective experience and identity of practising change leaders (Haynes 2006). I became aware of the potential dangers of accessing myself through the views of others as a result of my insider (Maydell 2010) position as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004) and of demand characteristics (Brenneis 1996; de Munter 2005) during interviews with colleagues. I pursued the exploration of my leadership practice through a postmodern epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) with its scepticism and questioning of the authenticity of human knowledge and practice (Schon 1987). It was as if the time had come in my life where I had to find and face the person that I was and to try and access a version of the truth before another place, another time and another interpretation.

### **The Purpose of My Research**

The purpose of my autobiography was to position myself as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004) and critically explore and analyse my attitudes, values and behaviours in the context of my role as head of marketing in a retail organisation. I wanted my thesis to help me understand and find meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) in my identity (Adams 2007) at work and to construct my leadership practice. I could then develop a theory that would contribute to knowledge. Although my research was conducted through the lens of my subjective interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and even bias (Dwyer & Buckle 2009), I believed my narrative had the potential to impact and inform leaders in many walks of life and positions.

At the beginning, my aspirations of achieving an understanding of myself and my practice were surrounded by a mixture of hope and anxiety, largely attributed to what I would find out during my research. It was inevitable that the exploration of my leadership at work would produce a unique experience for me and one where I anticipated enhancing my self-awareness (Atwater & Yammarino 1992), a concept that was important for a leader (Senge 2001), if indeed I could make that claim.

Initially I thought that being a leader was the right thing to be for somebody in my position in the organisation. Leadership must have featured somewhere in my practice to date so why not do more of the things that the literature says leaders do? I am sure that this was one of the reasons why I began my research so that I could substantiate and validate a claim to be a leader. However, as my study developed, I became

increasingly sceptical and unsure about this proposition. I realised that my subjectivity and sense of reality had changed over the course of my research. Postmodernism (Gergen 2000; Rose 1998) encouraged me to think in different ways and as I collected and analysed my data I questioned the very concept of leadership and its relevance to my identity and practice. I thought that in a postmodern context leadership might even be somewhat of a misnomer. This seemed to be contradictory to the purpose of my thesis yet I knew there would be value to myself and potentially to others in pursuing my inquiry.

### **Integrating the Themes of Self, Change & Leadership**

I initially thought that the transactional and transformational leadership models (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bennis & Nanus 1986; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) represented my ideal styles. There were aspects of these theories that were evident in my practice but there were many that were not, or at least consistently and to the extent that I interpreted the literature to infer. As my research unfolded these concepts became the catalyst for me to move towards my own theory based on my identity and experiences. My practice in its entirety did not fit conveniently into an existing theory and whilst some of my experiences confirmed extant literatures, other experiences revealed modifications or new perspectives to understanding. It would have been naïve of me to think that my practice in my situation would instantly match with generic theories given the specificity of my identity and habitus. The focus in my inquiry had become my espoused and enacted practice that reflected the values, attitudes and behaviours of my identity. Aspects of leadership were present as well as other theoretical concepts that I needed to be cognisant of if I was to construct my practice in a way that I believed my data and analysis had informed me.

A robust interrogation of theory, method and data and the relationship between all three produced nineteen constructions (figure 18) that constituted the construction of my leadership practice. My insider (Maydell 2010) position was reflected in how I influenced the direction of my research and in turn I realised how my inquiry had affected me. I was unsure about my leadership because I fell short of the criteria that were described in the literature (Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bennis & Nanus 1986; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) and this led

me to question what leadership meant to me, how my role was defined and how I would eventually come to understand my practice. I realised that wanting to be a leader with its assumed power and kudos was not what I was seeking and the idea of leadership began to feel at odds with aspects of my identity that my research had enabled me to recognise.

<b>Research Constructions</b>	<b>Indicative Conceptual Framework</b>
<b>Self</b>	
My Self in a Postmodern World	Adams 2003, 2006, 2007; Casey 1995; Mead 1934; McNay 2000; Callero 2003; Gergen 2000; Cerulo 1997
The Influence of My Early Years	Kets de Vries 1993; Bourdieu 1977; Casey 1995; Callero 2003; Mead 1934; Atwater & Yammarino 1992
Personal Characteristics	Goffman 1959; Bourdieu 1977; Gergen 2000; Gecas 1982; Elliot 2008; Adams 2006; Bion 1970; Kets de Vries 1993
My Behaviours at Work	Hirschhorn 2000; Obholzer 1996; Bass & Riggio 2006; Bourdieu 1977; Kets de Vries 1993; Freud 1900
My Emotions	Ellis 2008; Goffman 1959; Khaleelee & Woolf 1996; Yukl 1998; Bion 1970; Obholzer 1996
Individuality	Gergen 2000; Adams 2006; Mead 1934; Ellis & Bochner 2003; Bourdieu 1977
<b>Change</b>	
Change and Identity	Reissner 2010; Sommer & Baumeister 1998; Eriksen 2008; Galpin 1996; George & Jones 2001; Porras & Robertson 1992; Quinn <i>et al</i> 2000; Svenigsson & Alvesson 2003; Adams 2007; Graetz & Smith 2010
Change, Leadership & Management	By 2005; Bumes 2004; Kotter 1996; Yukl 1998; Eriksen 2008; Gill 2003; Luissier & Achua 2004; Adair 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006
Preparing for Change	Lewin 1951; Brown 1999; Eriksen 2008; Yukl 1998; Kotter 1996; Pendlebury, Grouard & Mesto 1998
Organisational Change in Practice	Kotter 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Pendlebury, Grouard & Mesto 1998; Pawson 1994; Bumes 2004; Yukl 1998; Graetz & Smith 2010; Lewin 1951; Eriksen 2008
A Changing Self	Bumes 2004; George & Jones 2001; Galpin 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Bridges 2003; Graetz & Smith 2010; Quinn <i>et al</i> 2000
<b>Leadership</b>	
Connecting my Practice to Transformational Leadership	Bass & Riggio 2006; Bass 1998; Deal & Kennedy 1982; Gergen 2000; Bourdieu 1977
Strategic Direction	Yukl 2002; Elder-Vass 2007; Obholzer 1994; Bass & Riggio 2006; Bumes 2004; Bass 1998;
A Focus on Customers	Drucker 1974; Bass 1998; Bourdieu 1977; Fineman 2000
Developing the Organisational Culture	Schein 1997; Bass 1985; Bass & Riggio 2006; Pepper & Larson 2006; Hope & Hendry 2006
Developing Followers	Bass & Riggio 2006; Hirschhorn 2000; Bass 1985; Yukl 1998
Power and Influence	Yukl 1998; Allen <i>et al</i> 1979; Obholzer 1994; French & Raven 1959
Leadership and Self	Adams 2006; Bass & Riggio 2006; Ellis 1996; Atwater & Yammarino 1992; Manz 1986
A Hybridised Practice: Transforming & Transacting	Bass 1985; Zaleznik 1998; Evers & Lakomski 1996; Bass & Riggio 2006; Kotter 1990; Fairhurst 2009

Figure 18: Inquiry Constructions & Indicative Conceptual Framework

Source: The Author

## A Changing Leadership

I realised that existing texts would not address my specific situation and would in many cases be different to my own working experiences. Past theories and models provided valuable knowledge and guidance on how things should or are done, yet this was someone else's research. I wanted to explore how the literatures were relevant to my situation and to improve my understanding of myself and my practice. From this position, I could contribute to knowledge from my experiences as evidenced by data from my social world (McNay 2000) and reflexivity (Callero 2003: Adams 2007).

The constructivist interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) I attributed to the data throughout my inquiry resulted in a mix of constructions over the themes of self, change and leadership. I realised at this point in my qualitative inquiry that quantitatively the constructions of self and change outnumbered those of leadership (eleven to eight). My reason for this observation was to demonstrate the tripartite nature of my practice and the contribution of self and change to what I have so far described as my *leadership* practice. The interrelatedness of the themes and constructions is evident as self, change and leadership became integrated to construct my practice, one that I described as a *changing leadership* (figure 19).

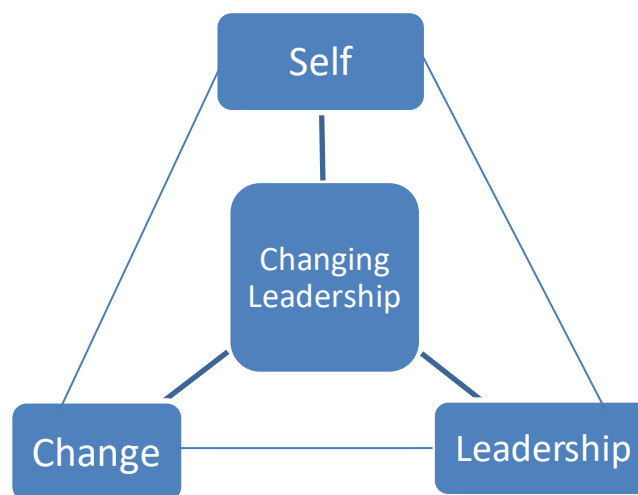


Figure 19: The Concept of Changing Leadership

Source: The Author

Although I accepted that this description was merely another way of playing with words in order to add a sense of something new being created from my research, I did genuinely believe that *changing leadership* described my practice more realistically than *leadership* alone.

I sought to define changing leadership but concluded that would be something of an oxymoron. Of more importance was how changing leadership represented the meaning I attributed to my analysis and findings. Perhaps this could be useful (Bochner 2002) to others in similar situations where differing perspectives could form part of a leaders' practice. It is after all only my interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) of my situated context in my social world (McNay 2000). I was concerned that yet another description of leadership in an already crowded space was of little benefit unless it was imbued with meaning (Sommer & Baumeister 1998) and relevance for me. I could twist words around to describe my practice in many ways yet this would make no difference to my experienced attitudes, values and behaviours in the workplace. I felt justified in adding the word 'changing' to 'leadership' whilst acknowledging 'self' was common to both themes as a concept to represent my practice.

Changing leadership was my truth and reflected the postmodern nature of my study where there was no one answer and interpretations were based on individual explanations of situations that cannot be generalised (Richardson 1991) given my identity (Adams 2007) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977). Multiple interpretations can arise and my perspectives and views were subject to change temporally. Indeed, my theory is not a fixed concept and may vary over time given different circumstances of habitus (Bourdieu 1977), a changing identity (Adams 2007) and reflexivity (Adams 2006).

Changing leadership had its origins in the comparison of theory and data analysis where I observed similarities and differences between the two sources. I became aware that I could not claim to be solely a leader, manager, transformational or transactional in terms of my practice. I had elements of each, but not one single concept adequately described my practice to its fullest definition. I only partially fulfilled the criteria for these concepts and not to the extent that was described in the literature. Even where the literature proposed that a combination of leading and



managing or transforming and transacting was the most appropriate approach, I was still not content with how only one of these concepts could be applied to my practice. Added to this scenario was the realisation that change was an ever present feature of my life through environmental, organisational and individual changes. From a theoretical point of view, change was the essence of leadership (Yukl 1998) and from a practitioner's point of view (Eisenbach, Watson & Pillia 1999), my research illustrated how change and leadership were intertwined.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

Most extant models of change in organisations take insufficient account of the individual within the planning and implementation of organisational change. Burke (2008) claims, for example, that we have insufficient understanding of the planning and implementation of organisational change. The contribution being made in this thesis, therefore, is to the mainstream management literature on change. My autobiographical account describes the central role of the individual in leading and developing organisational change and highlights the pivotal contribution of the identity of the individual and their leadership practice in organisational change environments.

The themes of self, change and leadership became intertwined into a holistic portrayal of my practice at work, with synergies, overlaps and adjacencies throughout that added to the richness of the contribution. I could not have one without the other two. The conceptual framework sourced from the literatures of self, change and leadership was instrumental in my movement through the phases of analysing my data, constructing my practice and developing theory. What I found was interesting and important because it related to what we thought we knew in terms of the conceptual framework, confirming and modifying existing understanding and expanding the current body of knowledge. There were existing concepts that I found relevant and there were areas where my practice differed to the literature. Readers can be invited to think with my story rather than about it (Ellis & Bochner 2000). My study does not attempt to convey universal truths but rather it conveys a self-narrative of a particular change leadership practice. It is hoped that the reader might relate to the narrative in a meaningful way and provide a lens through which he/she might obtain personal insights into their change leadership practice.

## *Self*

At the very point that I placed myself at the centre of my inquiry it was inevitable that my identity would feature as a theme in my research. Chapter four of my thesis discussed and analysed the theme of self in response to data collected from habitus and reflexivity. Six constructions were identified where self was evident in my practice: myself in a postmodern world, the influence of my early years, personal characteristics, my behaviours at work, my emotions and individuality. Together with other contributions of self to the chapters on change and leadership, these formed the basis of the following observations that contributed to theory.

I wrote about the quickening pace of social change (Gergen 2000) in recent years and I observed how my life had straddled an older world and a newer world with the loss of traditional values and a firm sense of self. In hindsight I suppose these characteristics of times gone by are all relative. However, there is no doubt that new technologies and communications have resulted in social saturation (Gergen 2000) where we have become immersed ever more deeply in the social world and exposed to the opinions, values and lifestyles of others in what has been called the postmodern condition (Gergen 2000). I agreed with the literatures regarding postmodernism and I connected this wider concept to the specifics of myself. As a family we experienced the saturated world every day, particularly my children who have grown up with many of the materialistic items that had not even been conceptualised ten or twenty years ago and are now assumed to be a necessary part of their lives. I also wrote about my work and how I am part of this postmodern era and have contributed to it. I think about my job where I am involved with marketing, communication and customers, ‘bombarding’ (Gergen 2000) our society with a never ending intensity of fashion and lifestyle images. Increasingly, I questioned the value of many things that I and others did or said. There is much to be applauded within our modern world, but I sensed that my scepticism (Schon 1987) has increased as I got older.

The postmodern world also connected with my job as head of marketing where changing customer needs (Moran & Brightman 2001), the dynamic nature of the retail fashion market that Peacocks operated in and an intensity of competitor (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010) activity had a direct bearing on my practice at work. This external perspective was the context for the whole organisation and affected decisions

at every point of the working day. It was this postmodern world that inspired and prompted my work on the strategic aspects of the Peacocks brand and in developing a closer affiliation with our customers. These activities became synonymous with my identity and practice at work.

I was aware that postmodernism allowed for a complete scepticism of human knowledge (Fawcett 1998) and that it may be possible to reject the very concept of the self on philosophical grounds (Callero 2003). On that basis, there would have been little point in undertaking my research. I was uncomfortable in taking this extreme position and reverted to aspects of postmodernism that welcomed diversity, variety and multiple interpretations of phenomena where localised, individual explanations were explored (Gergen 2000). Although it was not possible to access ‘the truth’, (Richardson 1994), the emphasis on the contextual and acceptance of uncertainty and variety led me in my research to subjectively articulate my version of a truth. I was not looking to invent myself (Rose 1998) rather to validate and reaffirm the person that I was as I faced the challenges and risks posed by my social world (McNay 2000) and potentially my own myopia. I was unaware of some aspects of my identity and I hoped that my research would enable me to create (Bruner 1990) and understand the construction of myself in the context of my practice.

My identity was socially constructed. Although references were made in research interviews to “born with his character” and a reference to “physical appearance” that inferred a genetic (Gioia 2000) aspect to identity, the overwhelming body of data was derived from my social world and reflexivity. As Mead (1934) stated, the self is initially not there at birth but arises in the process of social experience. I found it difficult to focus on one theory of selfhood because my analysis identified aspects of each that I considered were appropriate to my identity and practice. I considered that my external world expressed through social construction (Mead 1934) and habitus (Bourdieu 1977) and my internal world expressed through reflexivity (Adams 2007) and psychoanalytic (Freud 1900) concepts had a role to play in the construction of my identity and practice. This approach was akin to a version of self-identity that included reflexivity and the social, as well as the role of the unconscious, the irrational, the emotional and self-ambiguity as culturally refracted (Adams 2003).

Each concept of selfhood can be observed in my interpretation of the research data and the subsequent constructions I built.

The themes of leadership and self, encapsulated in the concept of self-leadership (Manz 1986) where I explored the question of who leads the leader, is a subject that is largely absent from leadership literatures. I took the view that the leaders' self is constructed by their social world, since early childhood, and it is this world that the leader in turn contributes to, producing a cyclical effect over time. As the leader experiences a changing social world, their identity becomes affected by such changes. This may be over long periods of time and the leader may not even be conscious of these changes until a period of reflection is undertaken, as I have done in this study. My experience revealed to me that as I thought about the idea of 'leading myself before leading others', the impact of change within myself and my attitudes and behaviours are present. These changes may have been undetectable at the time or have been as a result of a conscious decision to attempt to improve an aspect of my practice, as witnessed through this research. Recognising and attempting to change internal values and attitudes is fundamental to self-leadership, in the same sense that change is the purpose of leadership in an external situation. Our identities are constructed over time through our social worlds and there may be some aspects that cannot change, or we choose not to change. In my research, participants referred to my Yorkshire roots and suggested this influenced some of my behaviours that might be viewed as being different to how they perceived someone who worked in marketing would be. This is a characteristic, having recognised it, I would not change. Similarly, I learnt from my colleagues that I did not handle conflict particularly well, a point that I was aware of and that related to my internal conflict regarding my values and levels of motivation at times. This was an aspect of my internal leadership that manifested itself in my espoused behaviours and I decided that a change was necessary, one that saw improvements in my internal leadership and in my practice. Learning, reflection and at times, emotions, have a role to play in understanding and then changing how an individual views their own internal leadership including their assumptions, beliefs and values in response to their social setting, their habitus, and the consequent influence of the 'me' on the 'I'.

I connected aspects of my practice to the influence of my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993). Indeed, research participants also made this connection. The phrases “that’s his background”, “so inbred and born with his character”, “that’s the way he is”, “something to do with his character” and “inherent in his nature” were observations of my practice at work that participants attributed to my early years. The comments had been made with several contexts in mind, particularly in connection to how I responded to confrontation at work and dealt with conflict (Morgan 1997), lacked assertiveness and being reluctant to talk to people. Reflexively I considered I behaved in these ways because I experienced very little conflict at home as a child in habitus and so I tended to ignore conflict in later life, unsure as to how to deal with it.

I also interpreted interview comments referring to my reluctance to challenge authority figures by reflexively connecting to my childhood where my parents gave respect to others and expected respect in return, particularly my father who held a position of authority in the home. My feelings of wanting to be liked and pleasing others also connected to my childhood where I believe I was protected by my mother and this illustrated the relationship between child and mother (Freud 1900) with the idea of the child wanting to please his mother who will influence the child’s later attitudes towards, and expectations of, other people. I interpreted the control of my emotions being traced to my childhood influences (Freud 1900) and parental relationships where emotions were not in evidence. I had a feeling that my childhood was emotionless although subsequently realised that this would not have been the case and that habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) had inculcated me with the conditioning that followed my social environment (Elder-Vass 2007).

My childhood habitus was instrumental in shaping what became my values and these invoked strong memories of my parents. I connected the words used by colleagues to what I considered were my personal values (Senge 1996) that were fundamental to my self-concept (Gecas 1982) and capable of being part of my leadership practice. My colleagues had observed my “high principles”, “high standards”, “openness”, “honesty”, “fairness”, “trust” and “fun”. These characteristics reflected some of the traits that the literature described as being required for leadership: honesty (Turner & Mavin 2007); fairness (Bass & Riggio 2006) and trust (Kouzes & Posner 1988). The values (Senge 1996) identified by my culture were embodied (Adams 2006) in me as I

enacted and espoused these characteristics at work. The values (Senge 1996) go to the very heart of myself – respect, honesty, high standards, fairness, loyalty and trusting. These socially located comments were observed and reported by my colleagues and dovetailed with my own views and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) of my self-concept (Gecas 1982). I would like to think that these are habitual characteristics and are enacted unthinkingly (Adams 2006).

Much social theory, in particular postmodern theory, is devoted to a view of personal identity and social life filtered through images and performances (Elliot 2008). There were many illustrations of these phenomena within my practice that were revealed to me by my colleagues in habitus (Bourdieu 1977) where my identity became embodied in my role. My colleagues clearly expected me to be flamboyant, “like a marketing person should be”, when I was anything but flamboyant. I did not meet their pre-conceived idea of the image (Goffman 1959) of a “marketing person”. My choice of clothing became a costume (Kivisto & Pittman 2011) from which my colleagues formed an impression of me. My demeanour was noted, with the control of bodily management (Goffman 1959). There was little doubt that at times I have put on an act, a dramaturgical performance (Goffman 1959). This included controlling my emotions (Fineman 1993) at times. These occasions have clearly conflicted with my more natural behaviours, as witnessed by my colleagues in the research data. One of the features of contemporary selfhood that contributed to the difficulty in establishing identity was self-image and appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995). My colleagues raised the point concerning “part of the image” (Goffman 1959) I wished to present and the way I “packaged” myself. My research unearthed what had been a hidden feeling of mine for a long time. I kept any unconventional feelings hidden from others in order to present a coherent, stable and unified (Gergen 2000) self in my leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) position.

The use of language (Elliot 2008) was intriguing because the words and phrases used to describe aspects of my identity were derived from the marketing (Kotler 2009) profession of which I was a ‘member’. The depth of meaning I interpreted (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) from participants comments resonated with how language (Mead 1934; Foucault 1977; Fairhurst 2009; Adams 2003) is at the heart of the constitution of the self (Elliot 2008). My culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) stimulated reflexive

thoughts that hitherto had not occurred to me. It is interesting that comments referring to my appearance (Lasch cited in Casey 1995) and manner were raised in the context of leadership and illustrated how these aspects of my identity influenced the way in which my culture perceived me. They were a symbol (Mead 1934) that represented the values and standards I considered were appropriate to my position in the organisational hierarchy.

An aspect of my identity was espoused through my accent, demonstrating how habitus encouraged me to behave in ways that reproduced existing practices (Elder-Vass 2007) as I experienced as a child. Bourdieu explained that our accent is generally neither consciously learned nor consciously considered when we speak, yet it tends to reflect our social origins (Thompson 1992 cited in Elder-Vass 2007). My ‘Yorkshireness’ was represented by my accent, which until I speak is not evident. It is this aspect of myself that demonstrated habitus as an embodied phenomenon that signified amongst other bodily dispositions, a style of speech (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Adams 2006).

I was attempting to be the perfect professional but in doing so revealed my inability to convey this in a natural manner. This unnaturalness can be observed in several areas. My anxieties in not wanting to say or do the wrong things can be traced back to my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993). I kept my emotions (Gabriel 1999) in control even when I experienced unfairness, a contravention of one of my core values. I have always been self-conscious and aware of my own high expectations. I compromised my internal thoughts and feelings on many occasions because I did not want others to think negatively about me. It now appears that paradoxically these behaviours have led others to observe unnaturalness in aspects of my practice, the very thing that I was trying to avoid.

Interview participants spoke about my identity (Adams 2007) referring to where I was born, my characteristics and even commented on my physical appearance (Gecas 1982), something I assumed they felt comfortable doing and this ‘self-other’ talk was a discursive source that was an ingredient in my identity formation (Ybema *et al* 2009). The increasingly complex and dynamic working environment impacted on my sense of self (Galpin & Sims 1999) and was reflected in my research where my

identity became manifested (Funkenstein 1993; Archer 2007). I found the constructions regarding my personal background and values sourced from my social world (McNay 2000) to be significant given that the context of the interviews was an exploration of my practice at work. These comments emphasised the influence of my identity within my leadership.

Although under postmodernism it may be possible to reject the very concept of the self on philosophical grounds (Callero 2003), I found that for the first time I understood my origins and influences and thereby created my identity. There were aspects of a core to my identity and I considered I had a degree of unity and coherence (McAdams 1997). I had seen some of my attitudes and behaviours changing as a result of the different and numerous social worlds I experienced during my life. Indeed, I responded to the changing social world as part of my responsibilities at Peacocks and I became increasingly sceptical of organisational life as I grew older. I could be described as an interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama 1991), changing structure with the nature of the social context. Given my social situation in the working environment, I experienced a multiplicity of self, socially emerged (Mead 1934), where I felt an emotional response to my perceptions of others evaluations of me. My identity was fragmented in response to being simultaneously a worker, leader, manager, parent, friend, student and neighbour (Deetz 2003). I found that there were as many selves as there were social roles where I related to different generalised others (Cerulo 1997) at different times (Mead 1934) dependent on where and who I was with.

In a work context, the concept of leadership itself was a social phenomenon (Hollander 1993) and relational (Grint 2000). The context of work was a crucial domain for the development of my identity (Hogg & Terry 2000). My identity therefore became connected to leadership through my social world (McNay 2000), a world that provided the context for the construction of my practice through my research.

My analysis suggested there were some aspects of my identity that were more fixed and irreducible (Casey 1995) than others and emphasised what appeared to be a core (Callero 2003) to my identity. Research participants stated that I would not be able to



change these behaviours, where any attempt to do so would fail due to “the way I am”. Although identity is viewed as fragmented and multiple (Rose 1998) and socially saturated (Gergen 2000), perhaps my identity can be located in a rational and unitary self (Callero 2003) after all. My values (Senge 1996) of respect, honesty, high standards, fairness, loyalty and trusting and aspects from my childhood and the habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006). I experienced growing up with my parents was at the core of my identity, each substantiated by my culture through research data. Surrounding this core were other aspects of identity that can be interpreted as being more fluid and likely to change temporally given changing circumstances. These included my emotions and internal feelings that I tended to keep hidden from others in order to present a coherent, stable and unified (Gergen 2000) self in my leadership position. I consider that I retained a certain degree of unity and coherence expressed as selfing (McAdams 1997)

I sometimes thought that I was trying to hold on to some of the traditions of the past whilst balancing the diverse and postmodern social construction of reality that I was located in. My reflexivity created thoughts and scenarios that increased my natural anxieties and undermined the idea of a unified self (Gergen 2000). I experienced the influence of others that combined with my own characteristics, attitudes and behaviours. These included controlling my anxieties, my sensitivity, occasional lack of confidence, wanting to please others, avoiding confrontation, making the right impression and not wanting to make mistakes. These were based on the views of my culture. I was challenged by my changing social world and my reflexivity, leading to a more fragmented, multiple and doubtful scenario with a different voice for different occasions. I recognised my subjectivity and understood that my narrative was for one moment in time and even then could only be viewed as a partial truth. It was from this position that I reflexively considered my identity in terms of my unique aspects, those that differentiated myself from others, ideas that originated in a sense of individuality located in the context of my socially constructed self.

Ever since my childhood (Kets de Vries 1993), I felt different to others through personal circumstances and events. This feeling of individuality (Gergen 2000) lingered into my adult life although it was heavily countered by a relational worldview (Gergen 2000) that emphasised the social construction (Mead 1934) of my

identity with my self peopled with ‘the attitude of others’ (Mead 1934). Although I experienced a sense of individuality as part of my self-concept (Gecas 1982) I recognised that this was in response to the social worlds I had lived through where the ‘me’ contributed to my ‘I’, the unique and individual aspects of my unsocialised self (Mead 1934). I was not separated from my social world and any sense of individuality was subsumed by the postmodern fundamentals of fragmentation, multiplicity and contradiction (Rose 1998). On one hand I agreed with theorists who saw an increasing individualisation of social life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) and the resultant emergence of identity projects (Giddens 1991) to express their individuality. On the other hand, I empathised with the views of Gergen (2000) who stated that postmodernism has resulted in an individualistic worldview being replaced with a relational worldview and that social construction has led to a blurring of the boundaries of the individual.

It is probable that my sense of being different from others (Gergen 2000) stemmed from the ways in which other people have treated me, beginning in childhood (Kets de Vries 1993) where habitus (Bourdieu 1977; Adams 2006) engendered a feeling of safety. I reflected on how my research had revealed the ways in which my individuality (Gergen 2000) was expressed through my practice. My colleagues referred to my Yorkshire background and my history and early influences were in evidence as I practiced my work. I was the sole senior marketer in the organisation where my professional knowledge (Schon 1987) was practiced. The changes I instigated and implemented at Peacocks and the PhD I researched provided other unique factors to my identity and individuality (Gergen 2000). Perhaps my sense of individuality is a response to maintaining that safety and to repel ‘the images and actions of others’ (Gergen 2000) that potentially threaten my identity. I could retreat into individuality to protect my self-concept or conversely to contribute to my identity in my social world. Having a *sense* of individuality (Gecas 1982) is balanced with generality (Mead 1934).

The theme of self was pivotal to my inquiry as I was at the centre of the research as subject and researcher (Ellis 2004). As I learnt about theories of selfhood from the literature and my data collection and analysis continued, I realised that I could not attribute the construction of my identity to one definitive theory. Throughout my

study, the mix of the cultural, reflexive, emotional or psychodynamic theories of selfhood have had a contribution to make. There are genetics to consider as well. A further perspective is that the discussion of self and identity is inseparable from the social, cultural, relational and discursive fabric in which it is constituted (Adams 2007). Social theory and selfhood are set against a rapidly changing world with a dissolution of traditional bonds of social solidarity (Casey 1995), the effects of globalisation on the self (Callero 2003) and global media culture expose actors to a wider set of meanings for the construction of identity (Arnett 2002). From the earlier social tradition of symbolic interaction to the current hybridised versions of selfhood, the understanding and meaning I interpreted from my research data indicated that the construction of my identity and practice was based on multiple sources of selfhood. My identity did not fit one specific theory and I reassured myself that there was no requirement for it to do so. In a postmodern sense, this diversity, variety, multiple interpretations of phenomena and multiple strategies were welcome. Rather than seeking a centralised, uniform understanding of events, localised, individual explanations were explored. Subjectivity was emphasised (Alvesson & Deetz 1997). In this context, several theories of selfhood have to a greater or lesser degree played a part in constructing my identity and practice and each can be substantiated through my interpretation of the research data. This suggested that my study represented a version of self-identity that included reflexivity and the social, as well as the role of the unconscious, the irrational, the emotional and self-ambiguity as culturally refracted (Adams 2003).

At birth, there were inevitably genetic influences in the sense of my physical characteristics – a colleague referred to my “physical” appearance which I assumed was my height and shape. Thereafter, my self arose in the process of social experience (Mead 1934) and acquired from the generalised other (Cerulo 1997) a source of internal regulation that guided my behaviour. My childhood habitus (Bourdieu 1977) was evident in several aspects of my identity and practice, including the influence of my parents in formulating my values, in how I behaved in certain social situations in terms of maintaining an image and controlling emotions and in my desires to please others and avoid conflict. Even my Yorkshire origin was commented upon, as represented by my accent (Bourdieu 1977) demonstrating how habitus encouraged me to behave in ways that reproduced existing practices (Elder-Vass 2007) as a child.

With the beginning of my study, I became aware of reflexivity and its role in theories of selfhood. This ‘turning back on oneself’ (Lawson 1985) to question ourselves as subjects seemed to dominate my analysis and thinking. Reflexivity emerged from the social experience (Mead 1934) and was integral to symbolic interaction and the development of identity as a socially constructed process (Alvesson & Robertson 2006). Postmodernism placed reflexivity at the heart of the condition (Bauman 2001) articulated through reflexive biographies, identity projects (Giddens 1991). I was aware that during the course of my research I experienced reflexivity in a number of situations – during interviews in response to participants comments, whilst transcribing and reading scripts and as I analysed the data. Reflexive thoughts arose in meetings, driving the car and at home. Reflexivity occurred at any time and in an instance. These instances helped me to think about aspects of my research and practice and to understand why I behaved in a certain manner.

However, the emphasis on the cognitive in Mead’s theory was criticised as too rationalistic and conscious (Elliot 2008) and appeared disembodied. The emphasis on the cognitive at the expense of the emotional realm has been criticised as inadequate by authors influenced by Freud (1900) into the unconscious elements of the self that is structured by unconscious promptings. There were aspects of my behaviours that I considered were in response to the tension between my unconscious desires, wishes and fantasies and the requirements for social control and cultural order. The comment “will the real Richard Antrum please stand up” was a powerful statement. It inferred a dichotomy in my identity and questioned my true identity (Gergen 2000) where I kept unconventional feelings hidden from others in order to present a coherent, stable and unified (Gergen 2000) self in my leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) position. The comment suggested a multiplicity of roles (Goffman 1959) and that I was in some way an agent putting on a performance that was essential to my work identity. I considered that these suppressed behaviours were attributed to my childhood habitus.

The themes of the unconscious and psychodynamic theories of selfhood were evident in other aspects of my analysis of self. The authority of my father was embodied in my superego and my wish to please others and be liked stemmed from my mother, two perspectives that influenced my later attitudes towards, and expectations of, other people (Freud 1900). I tended to find fault with myself before others. This is akin to

the depressive position (Obholzer 1996) where I acknowledged my contribution towards the problem rather than the paranoid/schizoid position that blamed others. Colleagues projected (Klein 1959) their thoughts onto me and I became the container (Bion 1970) for their feelings and wishes. The containing (Bion 1970) of my emotions, anxieties and disturbances in my authority-cum-leadership role suggested I had been contained in my own development. My calmness was a trait of an introvert (Eysenck 1947) and emotionally stable person. I came to acknowledge that these psychoanalytic perspectives had contributed to the construction of my identity and merged with a postmodern approach psychoanalysis helped to reveal how and why these texts were constructed and emerged in the first place (Alvesson & Deetz 1997).

Throughout my analysis and consideration of theories of selfhood, reflexivity was contributing to my thoughts, ideas and self-mastery. I became more self-aware and in a sense more confident in response to understanding the reasons why I behaved as I did. The unconscious, emotional and embodied aspects revealed in my research gave a balance to my identity construction. I became aware of the negatives of reflexivity where my natural response in many situations was an anxiety, where for instance, empowering my team led to feelings that I had to control because of my leadership position which in turn led to deeper anxiety. Reflexivity deepened further these emotional feelings. Not wanting to make mistakes and be perfect rebounded on my emotions and my self-scrutiny engendered a negativity that my naturally positive outlook had to work hard to overcome. Total reflexivity seemed to be a path to narcissism and an exclusion of my culture and society. I considered these had been the instigator and provider of boundaries from where my reflexivity had taken place.

The habitus (Bourdieu 1977) in my working environment encouraged me to behave in ways that reproduced existing practices (Elder-Vass 2007). The habitual characteristics such as the language used, the sitting positions of colleagues in meetings, the expressions of those in power that indicate their mood all influenced my habitual behaviours and how I responded in situations with those around me. The inclusion of power through discourse (Foucault 1980) became embodied in colleagues' behaviours. I became aware of past habitus and schemas that were integral to my present identity. Work sets a framework where an individual's identity characteristics are shaped to fit habitus, where tasks and relationships are required to

be performed that in a non-work situation are not required. Identities can flourish, be constrained or experience a mix of both as demanded by habitus.

Although reflexivity has been contested as a theory of human agency by the concept of habitus, in a paradoxical sense my research has not only made me aware of the influence of habitus but also to reflect on the observations and issues raised by considering habitus as a theory in the construction of my identity. Indeed, the two approaches illustrated contradictory aspects of my identity, where for instance, my reflexivity thought that I was unconventional and at times rebellious in thought whereas habitus and my culture saw me as conventional and unlikely to behave in a rebellious way.

### *Change*

Chapter five of my thesis discussed and analysed the theme of change in response to data collected from habitus and reflexivity. Five constructions were identified where change was evident in my practice: change and identity; change, leadership and management; preparing for change; organisational change in practice and a changing self. Together with other contributions of change to the chapters on self and leadership, these formed the basis of the following observations that contributed to theory.

The literature details the nature of the rapidly changing world where the effects of globalisation (Cellero 2003), new communication technologies (Cerulo 1997) and the general shift to a post-traditional society (Adams 2007) have led to a profound change in the character of social life during the twentieth century (Gergen 2000). Postmodernism is set against this backdrop (Gergen 2000) where an emphasis is placed on transformation (Chia 1996). I recognised this world through the nature of the business that I worked in where social changes stimulated by ever-more sophisticated technologies and techniques were represented through changes in the marketing profession, the needs of customers (Moran & Brightman 2001) and the fashion market. The emphasis that postmodernism places on change, flexibility and transformation is highly relevant in these environments and particularly where subjectivity (Rose 1998) is evident on a daily basis in the organisation. I experienced change that is an ever present feature of organisational life (Burnes 2004). Burke

(2008) stated there was limited knowledge about how to plan and implement organisational change (Burke 2008) and my inquiry can add to the existing knowledge in this respect.

Change occurred at three levels – environmental, organisational and individual (Kanter, Stein & Jick cited in Hatch 1997). The social world (McNay 2000) in which Peacocks was located and the associated evolutionary forces of change that came from the behaviour of other organisations (Hatch 1997) prompted change. Change was driven from an organisational perspective as a result of Peacocks position in its business lifecycle and in response to the relative size of the organisation and the rate of growth that was being experienced (Hatch 1997). At the individual level, change was instigated though my identity and empathy with the concept of change.

The human element involved in change is a perspective that has hitherto been limited in extant literature (Galpin 1996). With the role of people as the creators and perpetrators of organisations being crucial (George & Jones 2001), my research contributes to theory by demonstrating the connection between my identity and organisational change. As the collection and analysis of my research data unfolded, it became evident that my identity (Giddens 1992; Adams 2007) was central to the concept of change (Kotter 1996; By 2005; Bamford & Forrester 2003; Burnes 2004). I considered that change had been a constant feature of my life since childhood, a reaction to the quiet social world I grew up in. As a change agent (Eriksen 2008) in the organisation, change contributed significantly to my practice. Some contradictions were observed by colleagues that stemmed from my identity demonstrating that characteristics or situations affected my change dominant practice from which I questioned my capabilities as a change agent. These questions lay with behaviours such as avoiding conflict and a lack of confidence at times, issues that were specific to my situation and illustrated how identity affected organisational change, a feature that is not represented in the literature.

The perspective of the identity of a change agent is limited in extant literature (Reissner 2010; George & Jones 2001; Wirth 2004) and is absent from change models (Pendlebury *et al* 1998; Kotter 1996; Bamford & Forrester 2003). I posit my identity was an influential element within the change process and offered a balance to the

emphasis in the literature on the functional and processual aspects of change. My research revealed how I approached change as a response to my identity, values and behaviours, supporting the view that change was fundamentally about people (George & Jones 2001).

My research enabled changes to take place to aspects of my attitudes and behaviours in my practice and to address weaknesses and the concerns of colleagues that I had become aware of. My experiences with attempts to change the organisational culture had adversely affected my practice and I reluctantly concentrated on my own values rather than those of others. I demonstrated a change in my handling of conflict that resulted in better relationships with colleagues. This demonstrated that it was necessary for me to change my behaviour and values for successful organisational change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville 2010). To effectively facilitate change, 'I found that I had to see myself, accept myself and to be(come) the change I wanted to see' (Quinn *et al* 2000 p.42). Paradoxically, as a so-called 'change agent' (Eriksen 2008), I found it difficult to face up to the issues within my own practice and seek change.

I saw my study contributing to the existing literatures of change by depicting my personalised, albeit subjective, experiences of the human dimension of change and the role of the individual which adds a different dimension to the rather process driven tone of many change literatures.

I suggest that there is an earlier aspect in the change process to consider prior to the steps or phases outlined in the literature, one that focuses on the individual who instigates and implements change, with the associated relevance of his/her identity, individuality, values and beliefs. The individual is the first step in any change. It is their presence and perspective that will set the tone and approach for the whole change initiative.

Extant change models tend to begin a change with 'defining the vision' (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998) or establishing a sense of urgency (Kotter 1996) as the first steps in creating change. My research indicated an initial period of assessment and thinking allowed an understanding of the change situation to be formulated before further phases were developed. This allowed the vision (Pendlebury, Grouard &



Meston 1998; Kotter 1996), creating the guiding coalition and team working (Kotter 1996) and mobilising colleagues (Pendlebury, Grouard & Meston 1998) to be commenced. Even then, a full picture was not possible as multiple dimensions and interpretations contributed to a complex scenario. This included the views of other colleagues and the spectre of power (Kets de Vries 1993; Yukl 1998) loomed as the politics (Hope 2010) of interested parties became evident. These perspectives were part of the essential knowledge I required which proved invaluable as my thoughts turned to approaching the changes I considered were needed. In reality, although these early phases of activity can be identified separately, they do not follow such a prescribed path and there are aspects of each that run concurrently – understanding the situation, thinking about a vision (Pendlebury *et al* 1998) and beginning to plan how to approach and communicate the change (Kotter 1996). These aspects represented the conceptual framework of a change initiative prior to the practical phases becoming espoused and enacted.

I found many of the change models in the literature were overly structured and process driven. The sequential, linear and rational order of events portrayed in literature change models contrasted with the effects of organisational life, power and politics. The irrational, creative and intuitive aspects of cognition and behaviour need to be accounted for. There are of course challenges and problems to overcome in establishing change, including myopia, communication, misplaced understanding, emotions, uncertainty, anxieties, conflict, embedded routines and cynicism. These were legitimate concerns that I experienced as well as placing others in those situations. Personality, politics and power are capable of being used in different ways, either positively in supporting a change or negatively by withholding support or by simply stopping a proposed change. As my research demonstrates, my experiences of these situations had a mix of results and feelings for myself. In a postmodern sense, there was no one answer in how to deal with change.

There was a tendency in change modules to describe broad patterns of organisational change rather than on change at the lower levels of organisations (Hatch 1997). The emphasis in the change literature on organisational change and the key role the ‘magic’ leader plays (Graetz & Smith 2010) reflected a changing global economy and environment (Callero 2003; Gergen 2000). There were many other change situations

that happened at a lower level in the organisation that affected individuals and groups through changes to department structures, roles or behaviours (Pendlebury *et al* 1998). My research illustrated this lower level of change within the marketing department (Workman & Jensen 2000). The effects of wider organisational change were also cascaded to a lower level and witnessed through my emotional and behavioural experiences as I sought to instigate a major organisational change (Nelson 2003). From a strategic viewpoint, the ripple effect of change is one that can often be undetected at an individual level. As the change agent (Eriksen 2008) I experienced a mixture of emotion (Fineman 1993) and frustration mainly associated with driving change from a lower level in the organisation rather than change being a top-down initiative. My identity characteristics and values (Senge 1996) were instrumental in pursuing the change that I believed in and the barriers of a lack of legitimate power and politics were challenged by influencing and persuasion, which to some degree, proved successful.

As the change initiatives I described became a reality, I had a sense of achieving a transformation of a major aspect of the organisation that was symbolised (Schein 1997) in a multitude of visual references throughout the stores and offices of the business and a realisation that another phase of organisational development had commenced. My learning (Coad & Berry 1998) was that complacency and self-satisfaction were danger signals that could prevent future changes. Although there was a degree of institutionalising the change (Nadler & Tushman 1990), the open-ended and continuous nature of change should be recognised to enable the organisational change agent (Eriksen 2008) to respond to the multiplicity of changes manifested in a rapidly changing postmodern social world (McNay 2000) that is multiplicitous, fragmented and contradictory (Graetz & Smith 2010). This postmodern approach challenged grand theories about organisational change and recognised that change was a function of socially constructed views of reality contributed by multiple players (Buchanan 2003). Paradoxically, I realised that I was attempting to create an improved brand and store presentation based on uniformity and consistency against a backdrop of an ephemeral, fragmented and chaotic social world (White & Jacques 1995).

The role of power was significant and instrumental in facilitating, de-railing or simply blocking change. I believed that power was a major determinant in enabling change to

take place or in some cases, to prevent change. Indeed, I viewed power as being very close to leadership in terms of the importance of its contribution in the formulae for change. The presence of power and its use affected changes that I instigated or supported in both positive and negative ways. These in turn affected my practice and levels of motivation. My research demonstrated to me that change cannot happen without power – my power or someone else’s power. Whether this is through legitimate power, influencing or empowerment will vary given the individuals and circumstances involved.

My legitimate power as a senior manager was sufficient to enable some changes to take place, changes that were in the main based on discussions, consultation and empowerment rather than enforced. However, for other changes, those that required board agreement and often with my peers in other departments, I found my power was restricted even though I possessed expert power (French & Raven 1959) in my role as head of marketing. I was faced with the discourse (Foucault 1980) of Peacocks that constructed my reality in a certain way, controlled by a few individuals and conventions, often unsaid but paradoxically understood by myself. Here, I found that influencing was my dominant method of expressing myself and seeking change, where my enacted power sat alongside those of others in a relational context and not simply within myself. This influencing became a dominant aspect of my espoused and enacted practice as I realised it was how I had to work in order to make the changes I thought were needed. This was my identity at work, allowing me to move beyond my formal legitimate power and boundaries to utilise my informal and personal power - influencing. Through this approach, I facilitated changes in the external aspects of Peacocks through brand developments and in the internal aspects of the organisation through my contribution to the change towards a customer culture.

Change is the essence of leadership and leading change was one of the most important and difficult leadership responsibilities (Yukl 1998). The role leaders play in the change process had been noted by change theorists (Kotter 1996; Zaleznik 1977; Adair 1990) and several literatures have been published more recently that link the two concepts (Eriksen 2008; Luissier & Achua 2004; Gill 2003). My research demonstrated the connection between change and leadership in my practice with data that I interpreted to mean that leadership was a prerequisite for change “an important

thing about being a good leader... is that you recognise the need for change” and “you lead change”. By referring to “you”, the three themes of my thesis – self, change and leadership – became intertwined and embodied (Eriksen 2008) in my practice.

My legitimate position gave me a degree of power within my role and I was able to make changes to the culture of the marketing department. My power became restricted as I crossed boundaries and sought to change the organisational culture. I came across barriers here that I was unable to overcome as those with a higher power became dominant. A similar situation arose in the changes I instigated to the brand and store development although in this case my influencing became more effective and changes were implemented, albeit with associated issues and without universal support. My power became my influencing and thus connected to leadership where the essence of leadership is influence over followers (Yukl 1998).

Change became involved in the extensive debate in the literature regarding management and leadership (Kotter 1996) as my research data included both concepts in connection with my change practice. The use of language (Deal & Kennedy 1982) is important and it may be that management was a substitute for leadership in the way that my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) interpreted their meaning. If a clear distinction was intended, then both leading and managing change were part of my practice. Leading change (Kotter 1996) would refer to the “instigation” and managing change (Kotter 1996) would refer to “you react to what needs to be done”, thus distinguishing between the two concepts whilst integrating both within my practice. The distinction revealed by my social world (McNay 2000) between managing and leading change was reflected in the literature with specific references to change management (By 2005; Moran & Brightman 2001; Burnes 2004) and debates regarding change management and change leadership (Kotter 1996, 1999; Mulligan & Barber 1998; Gill 2003). Contrary to Kotter (1996), as a manager I was concerned with the organisations purpose and identity and I instigated strategic change where I considered it was necessary.

Transformational leadership (Burns 1978; Bass 1985, 1998; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006) was primarily concerned with the capabilities required to enact change and my research demonstrated how my practice enacted such behaviours.

Even here, change took place. As my inquiry progressed, I moved away from the focus on the transformational/transactional leadership model as the basis for my practice as the themes of self and change became more apparent. The concepts of leadership and/or management were directly associated with my change practice as observed by my social world (McNay 2000) and change became symbolic (Schein 1997) of my leadership.

Change was excluded from management in the literature, a position that my experiences expressly contrasted with. Change was integral to my practice in terms of managerial activities just as much as it is was with leadership activities. In many respects, I could not achieve the leadership aspects without changing the management approaches. Indeed, management seems to be associated with change more than leadership through the language that is used in organisations. Despite numerous literature examples of change being implicit in leadership, in my experience there are more examples linking change to management, expressed in phrases such as ‘change management’ or ‘we’ll manage this change’. Rarely did I use or hear the words ‘change’ and ‘leadership’ being said in the same context. I have never heard the phrase ‘change leadership’ and very occasionally hear a phrase such as ‘we’ll lead this change’. These examples illustrated the subjective use of language in describing leadership and management.

There is an emphasis in change literature on the recipients of a change initiative rather than as the instigator of the change (Armenakis & Harries 2009). My research contributed to change theory though my experiences as an instigator and implementer of change where power, politics and emotions were played out as I attempted to influence others in pursuit of transformations that I believed in.

### ***Leadership***

Chapter six of my thesis discussed and analysed the theme of leadership in response to data collected from habitus and reflexivity. I hoped that my leadership experiences as a practitioner would form the basis of an inquiry where I could extend sociological understanding (Sparkes 2000) and where the reader would share in my experience as author (Jones 2002). Eight constructions were identified where leadership was evident in my practice: connecting my practice to transformational leadership; strategic direction; a focus on customers; developing the organisational culture; developing

followers; power and influence; leadership and self; and a hybridised practice: transforming and transacting. Together with other contributions of leadership to the chapters on self and change, these formed the basis of the following observations that contributed to theory.

There is no single definition of leadership and the field is open for contributions from a multitude of directions - 'leadership without perspective and point of view isn't leadership – and of course it must be your own perspective, your own point of view' (Bennis 1992 p.122). From this interpretation, the concept of leadership leaned towards a postmodern (Gergen 2000) one, which emphasised subjectivity and where localised and individual explanations were explored (Denzin 1993). I found leadership to be an intangible concept and difficult to define. I had a sense that it was something we should be doing at work but I was unsure what the specifics were and leadership can become nothing more than personal belief or opinion (Evers & Lakomski 2000) or taken-for-granted practices. I had difficulty in defining leadership at work because I rarely heard the word leadership spoken or seen in formal or informal written communication. It did not appear to be part of our organisational language (Deal & Kennedy 1982). Our working lives were dominated by practical actions – we managed, we administrated and we controlled, an approach to work that was symbolically (Schein 1997) reflected in job titles of manager, administrator or controller. I found language was a lens for understanding aspects of organisational life (Deal & Kennedy 1982). The discourse (Foucault 1980) of my habitus was weighted towards management rather than leadership.

Where leadership was quoted for research interviews, the specific behaviours from my practice can be referenced to transformational theory. "Role model" and "respected" were included in Bass's (1998) idealised influence component of transformational leadership; "giving direction", "clear objectives" and "communication" form part of the inspirational motivation component (Bass 1998); "new ideas" as part of intellectual stimulation (Bass 1998); "something to follow" implies that others follow me (Bass & Riggio 2006); and "learning" (Coad & Berry 1998); and "change" (Tichy & DeVanna 1990).

These characteristics reflected some of the traits that the literature described as being required for leadership: honesty (Turner & Mavin 2007); fairness (Bass & Riggio 2006) and trust (Kouzes & Posner 1988). I was not dynamic, charismatic nor extroverted rather my identity allowed me to undertake transformations in a quieter way, an observation that appeared to negate in my case a key aspect of the transformational leadership theory.

I considered that my practice was a hybrid of transformational and transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) as a response to the descriptions of my leadership and management behaviours by my culture (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) and my reflexivity (Adams 2007). My analysis identified aspects of my leadership practice that were comparable to transformational leadership (Bass 1985; Kouzes & Posner 1995; Tichy & DeVanna 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006). These felt to be moments of transformations rather than the core of my practice.

I reflected on the hybridised nature of my practice and considered leadership (Bass & Riggio 2006) and management (Storey 2004) were integrated in my practice and complemented each other to a much greater extent than I first thought. For example, I could not lead and ‘establish direction’ without thinking about the management aspects of ‘planning and budgeting’. One is required to facilitate the other. It is claimed leadership ‘produces change’ and managing ‘produces short-term results’ – it is inevitable that change, no matter how small, will have played a part in those results. Often leadership is needed to instigate short-term activities as well. The framework also suggested that only leaders have the trust of their people and can inspire them, whereas managers cannot. According to Burns (1978), transactional leadership involves values such as honesty and fairness that were represented in my practice. I wondered why these were not applicable to transformational leadership as well.

I found it difficult to discern all of the differences between management and leadership (Evers & Lakomski 1996) and be so prescriptive in specifying extremes. In my experience, there was a middle ground for many of the characteristics. I reflected at what point leadership became management (or vice versa) in my practice. Bass (1985) explains that transformational (leadership) and transactional (management) leaderships are distinct but not mutually exclusive processes and some leaders may

use both types at different times in different circumstances. My difficulty is knowing when one characteristic moved from one extreme to the other. As I went about my work, I did not think “am leading or managing?” I performed both leadership and managerial roles where the styles were situationally and temporally dependent. I led in situations where I influenced change, as in the case of the new brand and store designs, and also managed with activities such as arranging meetings, monitoring finances and people management.

My work on transformational activities such as strategy, customers and organisational culture contrasted with day-to-day activities. At times, transformational leadership was enacted through influencing (Yukl 2006) and an agenda for change as part of my behaviours. Yet these occasions accounted for a relatively small proportion of my role (Hirschhorn 2000). Most other activities could be described as transactional leadership (Burns 1978). This style is associated with some of the more basic aspects of organisational life (Bass 1985) including meeting department objectives, ensuring colleagues are supported and that the budgets and financial criteria are met. Underpinning these functions were the administrative and often bureaucratic aspects that need to be dealt with. This involved structuring, controlling and rewarding and what can be described as ‘mundane behaviours’ (Nadler & Tushman, 1990 p.86). My personal journals and diaries were full of notes that referred to the minutia of organisational life and included arranging meetings, sending emails, preparing presentations, monitoring costs, sending meeting action points, informal chats, answering queries from stores, responding to other colleagues requests for information, attending other colleagues’ meetings, signing invoices and expenses, colleague appraisals - the list is seemingly endless. Leadership was represented by such taken-for-granted practices.

Language use became a lens for understanding certain aspects of organisational life (Fairhurst 2009). My research revealed different interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) and the definitions of leadership and management from the literature are less meaningful to me. This reflected the local (Etherington 2004) social context in which my inquiry was situated where leadership was a concept that was not visible within my working life and not part of the organisational language (Deal & Kennedy 1982). Leadership was not a discursive phenomenon at Peacocks. I often think back over a



week and try and remember if the word was said. It usually wasn't. The talk was about management, administration and controlling rather than leadership. The cultural (Georgiades & Macdonell 1998) context that I worked in reflected the relationship between language and action that underpinned an interpretive approach to leadership research (Kelly 2008).

My research data and literature prompted me to reflect upon whether I was capable of leading and the managing. Two research participants commented that I displayed both leadership and management behaviours, albeit in their view skewed more to leadership. Kotter (1990) stated that it was unusual for one person to have the skills to serve as both an inspiring leader and a professional manager and in large organisations the two distinct roles are even more difficult to assimilate in one person, and the tendency is to set leadership skills aside in favour of managing the workplace. These contrasting views illustrated the differences in perspective of a specific local culture with general theory. The reality of my social context and my role (Hirschhorn 2000) is that I combined leading and managing within my practice at work. My leadership was to the fore when I was influencing (Yukl 2006) others to change the brand and store design. Once a decision had been made to proceed, my management became dominant in the form of organising the implementation of the project. This emphasised the interactive nature of leadership (transformational) and management (transactional) in my practice and reflected Evers and Lakomski's (1996) view that it was difficult to discriminate between the two styles

I experienced how empowerment (Munduate & Medina 2004) facilitated change. I associated empowerment with a leadership position and therefore by implication change. I viewed empowerment as an element of my leadership in the context of both empowering myself and others, yet this was not without issues. Problems emanated from this approach that posed a challenge to me in terms of how I handled the resultant conflict and confrontation. This was an aspect of my identity grounded in my childhood experiences. Further, there was also a fine line between empowerment and legitimate power in deciding some issues. However, the greatest issue for me as a result of empowering others was my anxiety and loss of control through transferring power to others and the consequent danger of not having reciprocal feedback and the latest knowledge. This exposed position was exacerbated through my fear that senior

colleagues would ask me a question and I would not have the latest position from which to answer. I rationalised these issues knowing that more would ultimately be achieved from empowering others and that I should therefore contain my anxieties. I also realised the futility of my and my subordinate's powers as I observed these to be merely loaned to us from the board of directors, able to be recalled at any time and superseded when necessary. I also experienced how power manifested itself through the discourse (Foucault 1980) of organisational life and through conflict borne out of mis-understandings of what empowerment meant in reality and through poor definitions of boundaries (Hirschhorn 2000) and roles (Hirschhorn 2000), some of which I contributed to and became aware of through my research. What became evident was that power has a temporal dimension and was not a static condition.

In a postmodern sense, roles or definitions were incongruent with how we experience life (Klein 2004) and I recognised this as I realised that transformational and transactional theory defined behaviours and leadership criteria that I could not fully meet. Some characteristics were relevant to aspects of my practice but others were not and the models became diluted when compared to my reality. They became a useful reference for my situated characteristics and I doubted these theories had a privileged place (Denzin 1993) in my practice. My personal reality was grounded in my working environment and I was creating truths about myself and my work where I interacted with others in my localised context.

When I compared the transactional leadership model as presented in the literature to my experiences. I found that transactional leadership activities, those that are concerned with day-to-day issues, the practical, administrative and often bureaucratic aspects of organisational life, were a significant proportion of my practice and to that extent I am in part a transactional leader. I found that change was equally applicable to transactional as it was to transformational activities. In the literature, change is not part of the transactional model, which given my experiences appears to be a serious omission. Changes in systems, policies and processes make vital contributions to any strategic change as well as more minor changes that can improve individual jobs or daily routines. As change is fundamental to leadership, it appears to be inappropriate to describe the transactional style as leadership. Transactional leadership appears to

have the same characteristics as management in the literature, a position that negates the title of leadership. Further, my research illustrated the complementary nature of transformational and transactional activities, where one is dependent on the other for their development and implementation. I could not deliver the transformational aspects of my practice without the transactional, and both are dependent on change. Similarly, I did not differentiate on a daily basis between what is a transformational and what is a transactional activity. Change became the dominant activity within my practice. I found that transactional style activities required degrees of influencing and empowering in the same way that transformational activities did, with the added support of legitimate (French & Raven 1959) power when required. The transactional style literature appeared to exclude other aspects of leadership such as trust, integrity, respect, listening and interpersonal skills. I viewed these as being equally valid to transactional/managerial activities and these were evident in my practice. The day to day, seemingly unimportant and often repetitive aspects of organisational work had at times more influence on my practice than some of the so called 'higher profile', more transformational leadership activities.

As I reflected on my data and the literature, I began to re-work my understanding of the concept of followers that formed part of transformational and transactional leadership theories (Burns 1978; Bass & Avolio 1990). Theories stated that anyone in the organisation can be a transforming leader (Yukl 1998) and this may involve peers, superiors and subordinates. The idea of followers can therefore be extended to those that are not just in a superior/subordinate relationship. Followers could be anyone in the organisation that have been influenced by a transforming leader. This appears an ideal situation for leaders to flourish given the appropriate social environment and the available power that would be required for this approach to be effective.

My research revealed other aspects of leadership that were not apparent in the literature. Although strengths and positive aspects of my practice were identified, weaknesses and negative aspects were also identified. This was an area that the literature to the best of my knowledge seems to avoid, indeed there is a dominance with describing what leaders should do rather than what they actually are. The depth of my leadership behaviours varied from areas of strength, for example, empowering, to areas that were weaker, such as dealing with conflict. My research suggested there

was a quality aspect to leadership where specific characteristics may not be equally enacted or espoused in my practice. I was not as consistent in my practice as the literature suggested and I fluctuated over time. This was as a result of influencing (Yukl 2006), experiencing power or the impact of politics (Allen et al 1979) and my consequent emotional feelings and levels of motivation reflected the ups and downs of organisational life. There was an 'ebb and flow' feeling that characterised certain aspects of my practice, such as handling conflict and maintaining a consistently high pace of change initiatives.

I had a perception that leadership literature was generally focussed on the top leaders who had responsibility for the leadership of the whole organisation (Bennis 1989; Kotter 1999). My analysis led me to believe that full transformational leadership as specified in the literature (Bass & Riggio 2006) can only be achieved by the top person in an organisation who is able to lead by example and use position power and influence in order to implement change to meet the future needs of the organisation. Anyone else in the organisation that seeks transformations will be inhibited by their lack of legitimate power, political standing and curtailment of any influencing abilities they may have.

This observation connected to the following.

The literature referred to transformational leadership being exhibited by anyone in the organisation in any type of position (Burns 1978). My research raised a number of observations that conflicted with this statement. I found that I was able to display some transformational leadership characteristics, but that a full transformational style was not possible given the power (Yukl 1998) and political (Allen et al 1979) context that I was working in. From my position in the 'second tier' of the organisational hierarchy, I was able to affect certain behaviours that would be seen as transformational from two sources – my position power and my influencing. As head of a department, I was able to make decisions within certain limits without needing the approval of my director. For other matters, including salary increases or promotions for member of my department, I required higher approval. Influencing played an important role in obtaining agreements to these situations as it did for the more strategic initiatives including the new brand and store design. Influencing lifted

my power above my position power (Munduate & Medina 2004), but it was still subject to the authority of those above me. I was only able to lead in a transformational style when others agreed with me. My experiences with developing the organisational culture demonstrated how I encountered difficulties with securing higher level support and when that was not forthcoming to the extent that was required, my transformational efforts were compromised and I became demotivated. I was dependent on the values, culture and working practices established by senior directors and this environment would not have met Bass and Avolio's (1998) statement that desired role models of leadership begin at the top and are encouraged at each level below. My leadership was directed up and across the organisation at certain times but not to the extent of achieving full transformational leadership. I was unable to create the degree of change I sought because of the constraints placed on my role. This is reminiscent of an individual hemmed in by social and cultural constraints (Foucault 1980) and the mechanisms of power at work in the organisation.

At the end of my research I have changed my opinion. My inquiry opened up a different way of thinking for me, one that questioned all assumptions about my practice at work. I now considered that even if I could claim to be a leader, I would not describe myself as such. It implied something more than the reality actually was. Leadership did not fit with my self-identity (Adams 2007) and how I wished myself to be. I could not claim to be a leader in the fullest sense of the concept because I am not a leader. It would be egotistical and narcissistic for me to do so.

I focused on the knowledge and meanings I was able to create and construct for myself given the data from my social world, my knowledge of the things I do and say at work and my reflections on the reasons for my behaviour. Whether this can be called leadership is a secondary issue and a subjective one. Leadership literature had played an important early role. Understandably, no one had researched or written about my leadership or had asked the people that I worked with about my leadership or indeed had asked me what I felt about my leadership. I was unable to locate my practice. I opted for the safety of transformational and transactional leadership theories (Bass & Riggio 2006) as I considered these to be the nearest models to my practice. I now understand that leadership theory has a place, but this is someone else's theory, generic models that covered a multitude of situations and could not

hope to be specific to myself and my social context. Transformational and transactional leadership theory was based upon positivist methods and my interpretive narrative method (Kelly 2008) has provided another perspective. The meanings in the literature were someone else's meaning and my inquiry has enable me to understand what leadership meant to me.

In summary, my thesis contributes to knowledge by connecting the themes of self, change and leadership, an area that is currently under represented in extant literatures. I learnt that leadership was an ephemeral aspect of my practice, sometimes transformational but for the most part transactional which I described as management. The themes of self and change are significant in my practice and further dilute the presence of leadership per se, to the extent that it is more realistic to refer to my practice as my changing leadership rather than as my leadership.

### **Contribution to Practice**

My thesis contributed to senior leadership practice in a commercial organisational setting and demonstrated new learning's concerning senior positions that were one level below the board of directors. It is from this perspective that new understandings were revealed from my practice. The analysis revealed not only the specifics of my practice, namely self, change and leadership, but also the daily organisational life that is imbued with power, influencing, politics and emotions. From a practitioners perspective, there was a 'dearth of in-depth research on the development of leadership practice from a relational, social and situated perspective' (Kempster & Stewart 2010 p.205). I hoped that my leadership experiences as a practitioner would form the basis of an inquiry where I could present an account to extend sociological understanding (Sparkes 2000) and where the reader would share in my experience as author (Jones 2002). My understanding of my leadership practice was of importance to me and colleagues and practitioners could also potentially benefit from my narrative (Duncan 2004). I was the subject and object of the research (Ellis 2004), a unique position from which to explore my practice. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no research that has focussed on leadership within a retail organisation, particularly in South Wales, and leadership as practiced by a head of marketing within a retail organisation.

I recognised that relating established leadership theories to my practice would reveal similarities, differences and new perspectives. In some respects, the relevance and application of theory can appear unhelpful to a practising leader. Evaluating practice against a model can result in the leader becoming ‘frustrated, confused or compelled to adopt the latest leadership trends’ (Turner & Mavin 2008 p.376). I empathised with this as I read through the descriptions of transformational leadership thinking that many of the components were part of my practice, others possibly and some definitely were not. I began to think how realistic are these theories when one takes into account one’s specific identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) and social context. I became increasingly sceptical regarding how often leadership literature appeared to be clinically prescriptive in defining itself and positive in tone. There are other perspectives to leadership that I have experienced that I seldom see in mainstream leadership research, those that include the internal angst, emotions, self-questioning and self-doubt associated with different experiences of being a leader, dimensions that are included in my inquiry as informed by a subjective epistemology. I often became anxious when I thought about the behaviours I should be adopting if I wanted to be a leader as described in the literature. Then I reminded myself that perhaps my identity (Mead 1934; Giddens 1991; Adams 2007) is such that I am not destined to be a leader. This is at the time when it has been suggested that the challenges of knowing, showing and remaining true to oneself have never been greater for leaders (Gardner *et al* 2005). I anticipated that my inquiry would help me resolve these thoughts as I went about my practice. I have weaknesses as a practitioner. These were identified by my culture in the interviews and from my own knowledge and reflexivity. Few writers have examined the weaknesses of leaders based on empirical data, although Yukl (1999) examined the conceptual weaknesses of transformational leadership. There appears to be a significant gap in knowledge in this area which does not reflect my experiences. As Turner and Mavin (2007) state, the literature often ignores such ‘flaws’. I found that the value of identifying my weaknesses, particularly from the perspective of my colleagues, enabled me to be more receptive to criticism and to attempt future improvements in practice.

The organisational context in which I practiced was highly pragmatic and down to earth. I sometimes wondered if my identity was the right fit, but perhaps after sixteen years of working at Peacocks I can say that it probably was. To research and even talk

about a PhD is something that raised various colleagues eyebrows. It is not the sort of activity that somebody would take part in, to openly have their practice critiqued and run the risk of being seen to be different, even special, in some way. However, my research has demonstrated that this type of study is possible in environments that a researcher may consider unsympathetic or would be difficult to manage.

I began my study with some preconceived ideas about what leadership I was most suited to and how my practice would be constructed. I had read many literatures about leadership, management and change and how things should be done and no doubt tried to incorporate these into my practice or research. In the end, these were misplaced efforts. I learnt that by consulting with colleagues and widening my thoughts that it was possible to construct *my* practice and break free from conventions or false expectations. As a practitioner, I hoped to take this perspective forward with me in my future practice.

### **Reflections on Methodology**

My thesis enabled reflections to be made regarding methodology through a methodology novel to mainstream change model research for use by researchers and practitioners in similar circumstances to myself who are looking into their change and leadership practice. I adopted Cresswell's (2009) model of research design that included a philosophical worldview, a strategy of inquiry and a research method.

*Postmodern philosophy* - I was attracted by a postmodern philosophy (Gergen 2000; Bauman 2004) that encouraged me to think about alternatives to traditional, positivist research methods, those that can connect to people and their concerns. I was looking to find ways of working that complemented my values, views of reality and beliefs about how knowledge is known and created. At the heart of postmodernist thought is an extreme or complete scepticism of, or disbelief in, the authenticity of human knowledge and practice (Schon 1987). Emphasis is placed on change, flexibility and transformation (Alvesson & Deetz 1997), perspectives that were particularly apposite to my practice.

*A Strategy of Inquiry* - qualitative research allowed me to study myself in my natural setting and to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings I can



bring to them. It is the world of lived experience, where individual belief and action intersect with culture (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). The constructivist paradigm is based on relativist ontology (personal reality), interpretive epistemologies (lived experience) and interpretive, naturalistic methods (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). The constructivist philosophy is idealist, assuming what is real is a construction in the minds of individuals (Lincoln & Guba 1985). It is also pluralist and relativist. There are multiple, often conflicting, constructions and all are meaningful.

*Research Method* - the postmodern phase of qualitative research was defined in part by narratives that have long been of interest in accessing an individual's subjectivity, experience and reflections of the past (Byrne 2003). Postmodernism has encouraged a return to valuing local stories and lived experience (Etherington 2004). By positioning ourselves within the text, by deconstructing dominant discourses and taken-for-granted assumptions about the world (Derrida 1981), by refusing to privilege one story over another and by allowing new stories to emerge, we have come to a 'narrative turn' in the world.

Autobiographical narratives offer a valuable means of understanding and interpreting the identities of individuals within social and professional contexts in which they are formed. Autobiography as a methodological principle links epistemology and ontology with methodology and the narrative forms an important part of identity construction within the cultural, social and political practices of which it is a part, and which it is also capable of perpetuating.

I believed that writing from an autobiographical perspective was invaluable to the development of meaningful knowledge for individuals who are attempting to construct their change and leadership practice. This narrative form has been little used as a means of exploring the construction of identity and practice in professional settings, particularly in the management literature on change.

*Data Collection* - I was aware that the use of self as the only data source in autobiography had been questioned (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Sparkes, 2000) and I wanted to include other data sources as well as my own which would represent a wider cultural perspective. Autobiographical accounts do not consist solely of the

researcher's opinions but are also supported by other data that can confirm or triangulate those opinions (Duncan 2004). The data collection methods comprised my introductory life autobiography, a series of one-to-one and focus groups and a personal journal based upon events, critical incidents and observations.

*One-to-one interviews* - I adapted previous formats to enable me to focus on aspects of myself as the research subject where I required interview participants to give feedback on aspects of my practice. There is little evidence in the literature that set a precedent for this approach and I established a rationale for the use of interviews in this context. In summary, postmodernism opened new freedoms in methodologies and methods of data collection (Ellis 2004) and new interpretations of interviewing should be encouraged (Wall 2006); I wanted to avoid the possibility of criticism for being self-indulgent, narcissistic and introspective (Sparkes 2000; Atkinson 1997) and interviews concerning self can confirm or triangulate one's own opinions (Duncan 2004); and it was suggested that researchers seek research participants so that a personal topic can be illuminated by a variety of perspectives (Moustakas 1990 cited Wall 2006).

*Focus Groups* - the focus groups also concentrated on myself as subject and were facilitated by a third person, a senior colleague of mine, instead of myself. I adapted proven interview structures in other studies to what I believe were previously untried interview formats. Regarding the use of a facilitator in the focus groups, I referred to a postmodern context where many ways of knowing and inquiring are legitimate and that no one way should be privileged - new and unique ideas of the researcher can be included (Wall 2006). All assumptions in research methods are questioned and we are encouraged to 'abandon all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives....and prejudices as resources for... study (Vidich & Lyman cited in Wall 2006). In this spirit, the use of a third person to facilitate the focus groups provided further triangulation to my data. There are precedents for this approach within the literature. Third-persons have been used to establish the context for an interaction, report findings, and present what others do or say (Cauley cited in Ellis, Adams, Bochner 2011).

### *Theoretical & Practitioner Interview Issues*

*Demand Characteristics* - the unspoken expectations conveyed by one part to another are to be found in all social situations and influence all members of these social arrangements (Brenneis 1996). In a one-to-one interview, this phenomenon has the potential to be particularly acute. I had stressed all along that I welcomed positive and negative, honest feedback and areas for improvement. This could paradoxically have been interpreted as a trick on my part to illicit feedback that the participant may reluctantly be enticed into revealing. There was a physical aspect to the interviews. Looking and listening at the participant as he or she spoke, thinking about the words, having internal feelings and emotions and then responding either through speaking or maybe some movement with my hands, or shuffling, was part of the interview experience. A smile or nod by myself when a response was given, the tone of my voice, a questioning look - 'bodily dispositions, a style of speech' (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Adams 2006) - may have influenced the participant in saying the next comment.

*Power* - an associated theme concerned the dynamics of power within interviews (Hoffmann 2007). I was aware of the context of the interview and of a feeling of power I had as a result of being the organiser and subject of the interview. The choice of location for the interview is a case in point. Interviewers are often cautioned to articulate and render transparent the supposed power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee, but the power in any interview shifts constantly (Trahar 2009). Research participants will often find ways to tell the stories they want to tell rather than, or perhaps as well as, those that they think the listener wants to hear. The researcher may bring his/her own agenda to the interview and want the participant to hear something of their experiences and opinions.

*Insider Perspective* - I was in a unique insider position because as well as being the researcher I was also from the same organisational culture as the participants (Smith 2005) and familiar with the informal structures of the organisation and how to get things done (Roth 2007). I had to balance my organisational role with the additional demands of a role of inquiry and research and I needed to be aware of how my roles influenced my view of the world (Coughlan & Holian 2007). 'The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to

the experiences and meaning systems of others – to indwell – and at the same time to be aware of how one’s own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand’ (Maykut & Morehouse 1994 p.123). To address the insider position and the value of accessing self from the position of others, a relevant theoretical foundation for the study of self is social constructionism and a methodological framework is positioning theory (Maydell 2010).

Although this theoretical and methodological approach afforded access from which to begin my research and substantiate the contribution of my culture to the construction of my identity, there were dangers that the researcher should be aware of. These included the organisational and personal context of the interviews, the dynamics of the interview in progress, the bias of the researcher and the presence of politics.

Through the application of this research methodology and methods, my inquiry connected my self to my culture (Ellis & Bochner 2003) and the research process enabled my identity and practice to be constructed with the analysis embedded in theory and practice (McIlveen 2008). I experienced how vital the research process had been in generating meaningful data. Qualitative studies of transformational leadership based on a subjective and interpretive epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) are to the best of my knowledge rare in the literature. My autobiographical inquiry will contribute to filling this gap and will be of value to myself and others in similar positions.

### **End Remarks**

I recognised that my theory can be viewed as yet another interpretation, positioned in the crowded literature of leadership market. I can be sceptical myself of this. Yet I believe I have made a contribution to knowledge through my autobiographical inquiry and that my work has been of value to myself and I anticipate to others in similar situations. My inquiry was made possible only with the help of others whose impact on my identity formation I could not have envisaged in the very beginning (Maydell 2010). A gateway to my own world was made possible (Chang 2008). My narrative is my story, of how I interpreted the social construction of myself, knowing that my past created my present and will dictate my future. This piece of work is part of that evolution. My identity, with its multiple nature, paradoxes and temporal aspects, has

been given a stronger meaning by exploring my practice at work. There are characteristics of myself that have survived since my childhood, providing a sense of a core to my identity, whilst other aspects are subject to change through habitus. My reflexive project has enabled my identity to be recognised. My narrative presents my story and seeks to make sense of myself, experiences and social world so that when I am asked “who are you?” I can answer “this is who I am” and can tell the story of ‘me’ to the inquirer. As Reed-Danahay stated (cited in Ellis & Bochner 2000 p. 737), I hope the readers of this thesis will “by exploring a particular life... understand a way of life”

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## Appendix 1

### My Introductory Life Autobiography

#### Early Years

Sometimes in conversations, the question crops up “and when were you born, Richard?” to which my usual reply is “at a very early age”, a comment inspired by Groucho Marx. To be precise, I was born at 10.50pm on Monday 11th March 1957 at St. John’s Hospital in Keighley, West Yorkshire. My mother had a difficult birth with me, having been confined to bed for a several weeks before my birth, which followed an earlier near miscarriage when my parents were on holiday in Torquay. My weight at birth was 8 pounds and 10 ounces, and I was nicknamed ‘Buster’ by the nurses in the hospital. Not much was happening in the world in March 1957 – my birth was sandwiched in between the Suez Canal re-opening on March 8th and the Treaty of Rome establishing the EEC on March 25th. For myself, and I assume my parents, it was a memorable day.

I’m fortunate to have many photographs taken of me from a very early age, which continued through out my childhood until the age of about thirteen or fourteen. Actually, I’m sure that the number of photos declined as the years are moved on, the reason for which I cannot explain. However, these are now powerful images which help me to locate my childhood amongst family and friends and invoke some memories. My very first memory is of Stephen Owens, who lived a few houses away and was a year older than me, accidentally fracturing my leg whilst playing on our very small lawn. I was four at the time, and my leg was in plaster for several weeks. When I was five, my older stepbrother, Michael, was married at Beverley Minster. My sister was a bridesmaid (she was only two and a half years old) and to mark the occasion, Michael and his new wife Gwen gave me a gold tiepin – I still have it today. I started school at Easter 1961, and my mother walked me the five-minute journey from home to school on the first day. I walked on my own thereafter. I can remember strolling on the pavement at the front of the school on my way home on the last day before a summer holiday, singing away to the lyrics of ‘Summer Holiday’ by Cliff Richard. I must have been either six or seven at the time.

I’ll return a little later to the early years, but first some background information.

The word Antrum is not a commonly used word, and for it to be used as a family surname is even more unusual. The origin of the word is Latin, meaning cave (the Greek being antron). It is also a medical term for 'a natural cavity, hollow or sinus, especially in a bone'. Within the human nose is a sinus or passage; the medical term for this is an antrum. Further, the antrum cardiacum is a constricted passage from the oesophagus to the stomach. Like it or not, therefore, one cannot escape from the antrums!

The earliest information regarding the family name is from the late seventeenth century. Amongst the Huguenot community in France was the Antrum family. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes by the Catholic Louis XIV in 1685 led to the persecution of the Huguenots, and many were forced to leave France. Amongst those

that fled to England were my descendants, who settled in Kent. Over the next hundred years or so, they slowly spread to London, York and eventually to Keighley in West Yorkshire – the place I was born.

I have always been conscious of having an unusual surname, and many people over the years have also commented on its unusualness. Needless to say, I am very proud of my name; it's a unique name. Many people confuse the spelling of Antrum with that of County Antrim in Northern Ireland. This is an understandable mistake, and I am usually very understandable when it happens for the first time, but not on the second occasion!

At school, I was always first or second on the register, which had its advantages and disadvantages. Over the years I was used to doing activities first in the class, which in most cases I am glad to say went to plan. But I always looked forward to those enlightened teachers who from time to time started at the other end of the register and worked backwards when asking their students to perform.

As far as the Antrum name is concerned in this country, there is only one family - we can all be traced back to the original family. All Antrums have been carefully listed since the register of Births, Marriages and Deaths was established in 1836. This was achieved through the Family Tree which I researched during the period 1985 to 1991 which was a positive exercise in communicating and establishing relationships with relatives which I did not previously know existed.

This seems a good point to talk about my parents, two people that have had a tremendous influence on my life.

My mother has been my friend, disciplinarian, protector and a symbol of strength. She gave me my determination and sense of 'family'. Audrey Antrum (nee Moses) lived in Keighley for all but three years of her life. Mum not only ran the home, but also contributed to the income of the house with two part time jobs. It was Mum who dealt out the punishments, but it was also Mum who made those fantastic Yorkshire Puddings, dumplings, stews, desserts and cakes. Despite not moving out of the area, she saw tremendous changes in the town and in her role as a wife and mother. When describing her, words like reliable, caring and willing to help are at the top of the list. She was also supportive of my education - I think hiding her disappointment through my average performances at O and A level (the first time) examinations, but very proud when I did achieve, especially my MBA. She was realistic to know that growing teenagers do many things that their parents do not want them to do. I had a wide degree of freedom. However, I knew when I had overstepped the mark and I would receive the appropriate guidance! Deep down, Mum was very protective of me. Whether this was because she nearly lost me through a miscarriage, and then later again nearly losing me when I was eleven with meningococcal septicaemia, I can only surmise. Her sense of humour was legendary, her friendships with so many people and her role as the centre of the wider family was symptomatic of her personality – loyal, pragmatic, stable, dependable, traditional. And she was passionate about Yorkshire, the Lake District and the surrounding moors around where we lived just outside Haworth, the home of the Bronte sisters. If there are any criticisms, it was that because Mum was so traditional, stable, dependable etc, is that life was pretty predictable – our holidays were with family or in a flat in Barmouth, North Wales; our food at home was all traditional English dishes - there was no sign of an Italian or

Indian dish (I was aware that friends of mine did have the occasional foreign meal, even in those days), and we never went out for a meal as a family to a restaurant, instead visited family or friends. Maybe these observations are a little unfair, given how we take these activities for granted today, but that's how I remember it. Mum also showed a huge amount of deference to people in 'a position', for instance, doctors, teachers and other professionals, where a more challenging stance on occasions would have been of more benefit. Sometimes it felt as if we were somehow not good enough, more like a class divide. But these are relatively minor points when compared to Mum's overall persona.

After my father died in 1979, Mum continued to live in the family home until 2003, by which time she had lived here for 43 years. By then, her health had deteriorated to worrying levels, primarily through advanced dementia. Something had to be done, and much discussion took place between myself and my sister and our respective partners. We had agreed in principal that Mum would have to leave Keighley and come to Chepstow to live in a residential home, specifically for residents with dementia. But how on earth were we to get her to leave the house? She had steadfastly refused when I had discussed it with her. Then, on her 80th birthday, my wife Sue took a call from Mum's friend. Mum had fallen at home and was in hospital in Keighley, badly bruised and semi-unconscious. We all went up to see her straight away, yet despite the upset, it was the opportunity we needed. Mum spent several weeks in hospital and then in a home in Keighley before we brought her down to the residential home in Chepstow. Although initially she was unsettled, a few weeks down the line saw her feeling more content and having regular visits from my family and my sister's family, who were based in Surrey. Even here she made her mark with her personality and humour. However, in February 2006, Mum had two strokes, which knocked the stuffing out of her. After coming in and out of hospital, we decided she should return to the home. We knew that her life was coming to an end. But even at this time, her sheer presence created great moments of comedy (I cannot hope to convey this feeling on paper); the way Mum called 'ooh, ooh' at the nurses to attract their attention; and on what turned out to be her last journey, when arriving at Chepstow Community hospital from the Royal Gwent in Newport, my wife arrived at just the same time as the ambulance, only for her to say Mum's not going in here, she's going back to the residential home – we had decided she had had enough running around – oh, she would have laughed at that sight. That weekend, we all spent time with her as she lay still in bed, occasionally seeing a response from her, but watching her life slipping away as each hour passed. Eventually on the Tuesday at 2pm, she passed away, the final stages of death lasting about twenty-five minutes. As she lay there, my sister and I said our goodbyes to her, knowing that we had been with her over the last few days and that she was now safe in another place. Her funeral was held in Keighley the following week, and this was a celebration of her life with many family members and friends, an occasion that many said that Audrey would have loved it! So, at the age of 83, Mum left us in body, but not in spirit - I think about her most days and miss her unbelievably – I must be a Mummy's boy really!

My relationship with my father was based on a deep respect for him, although it was more distant than the relationship with my mother. My father was 47 when I was born, and was therefore always an 'older' father when compared to my peers. Coupled with his ill health, this removed any physical dimension to our relationship in terms of playing football and other sports or even walking together. In fact, as I moved into my

teens I became very aware of my fathers age, and the fact that his ill health made him look even older. To be honest, and my shame, I was embarrassed about this when with friends, several of whom made comments that I thought were not very nice. I suppose with his big overcoat and trilby, he did look old. But then he came from a different generation, born in 1910, and brought up in a middle class family that was a lifetime away and so different from the 1970's.

My father married my mother in 1952 when he was aged 42. He had previously been ill for a number of years, including a perforated ulcer and suspected tuberculosis. Poor health would continue to be a feature of my father's life, with emphysema eventually being the cause of his death.

In the early part of his life, he had a successful career as a musician. When he was aged 15, he was the organist at Keighley Parish Church. He then moved to Leeds Parish Church as assistant organist, and then developed his career as a cinema organist playing at the major cinemas in the north of England, London and in the Isle of Man. This was a very successful period - cinema popularity was at its peak and my father relished in the role of entertainer and improviser. However, in his early thirties, events took a turn for the worst. I don't know any real facts about this period, suffice to say that an unhappy marriage, ill health and the responsibility of a young son (my stepbrother Michael was born in 1938) must have conspired to end my fathers professional musical career. In 1946, when my father was thirty-six, his sister died of tuberculosis aged twenty-eight. He then nursed his mother prior to her death from the same disease in 1949. After his second marriage, to my mother, he worked in the offices of Yorkshire Electricity in Keighley, which must have contrasted greatly to his previously exciting career. I never understood what really happened to his musical career, and why he never found another way in which to use his wonderful musical talent.

My father was a proud and intelligent man, well spoken, and his circumstances in the second half of his life did not reflect his abilities or natural gifts. He was a quite man, very private. He was very supportive of my education, and as I grew up would encourage and help me, as well as talking to me about a wide range of subjects regularly. But then as I moved into my middle teens, we didn't seem to have much to say and I know that he was disappointed that I did not reach my academic potential when I really ought to have done. I think this created a divide between us. This divide can, and often is, bridged as the teenager becomes older and more mature. Unfortunately, I was not able to do this with my father, as he died when I was aged twenty-two. I am convinced that we would have been very close had we had the opportunity, and I do feel a certain amount of guilt for not living up to his expectations whilst he was alive. This guilt is compounded because my father was taken ill quickly at home in Keighley. I was working in Surbiton at the time, and despite making the journey as quickly as I could, I never had the opportunity to say some final words or goodbye to him because he never regained consciousness. I did see him in the evening when I arrived at the hospital, but then I went home to bed. Dad died early the morning after – I knew I should have stayed overnight. That's why I never left my Mum's bedside until she had finally passed away.

There is no doubt that my father had a significant impact on my life, and still does today. His attributes included high standards, working to details, patience, setting



clear rules and a very dry sense of humour. On the negative side, he could be slow to react to a situation and his temper, when pushed, could be explosive. I can see a lot of these traits in my behaviours. He was also tolerant and allowed quite a few boundaries to be crossed as I grew older - for instance, allowing me to have long hair and wear strange clothes, which demonstrated his patience and tolerance given his own background.

At this stage, I am not surprised if the reader is thinking that this is all pretty depressing stuff and that my life has been dominated by death and problems. I can assure you that this is not the case. There is some positive news. As mentioned a little earlier, I survived a life threatening illness – meningococcal septicemia – at the age of eleven. Not only did I survive, I was lucky enough not to have any physical or mental disability as a result of the illness. After three days in a coma, with various drips and wires plugged into me, I started to recover and this took about six months, a period of great worry for my parents. The event had a major influence on my life in the sense that if things are not going to plan sometimes, I think back to my illness and that I should be grateful that things turned out as well as they did. It's a point of reference for me, something that all other happenings in my life can be put into perspective. Again, an inner determination played its part in my recovery, a strength, an optimism, which I think characterizes much of my later life behaviors, values and attitudes.

I grew up in a 'traditional' family environment. As well as Mum and Dad, there was my sister Judith who is two and a half years younger than me and with whom I have been close to since we were children. We lived in a pleasant semi-detached house, about three miles outside Keighley and very near to the village of Haworth, famous for being the home of the Bronte sisters. The area was characterised by a mix of industrial and farming activities, surrounded by moors and hills. I thought it was a really interesting place to grow up, although I once read that when Mrs. Gaskell arrived at Keighley railway station to begin her research for her biography of Charlotte Bronte, "she found the area so unattractive that she feared a stranger could never come to understand it".

As I grew up, I noticed though that there were certain things that made me feel that we were a bit different from other families. None of these items are in themselves unusual, but when added together lead me to think that we were somewhat unconventional. I have already spoken about my father, being an older and unfortunately ill man, which restricted severely many activities which other families took part in. My stepbrother is nineteen years older than me, and had moved away prior to my birth. Michael had his own family, the eldest son being only eight years younger than myself. It just seemed different. All four of my grandparents had died before I was born. My parents had very little money that again restricted activities, including holidays. We didn't have many material items – no car (apart from a period of six months when I was twelve), no telephone in the house until I was sixteen and an old TV which could only receive BBC1 until it was eventually replaced with a new second hand set when I was about thirteen – so no ITV until then, and thankfully Monty Python was on BBC1. In contrast to ourselves, most of our direct and indirect relations were families that were financially well-off – uncles directors of major plc's, successful accountants, architects, self-employed businessmen – all with the associated trappings of their positions. So I considered ourselves to be relatively poor – no, actually, we were poor. But this was from a financial perspective. We were not

poor in other ways. There was love, a feeling of family, supported by many relations of both my mother and father, with uncles, aunts, cousins etc, as well as many close family friends, particularly of my mothers'. I consider my childhood to have been a happy one, valuing the possessions I had and realising that they had not come easily. We had books, games, music and activities outside of the home to fill our time. It was a stable upbringing with very little change in the pattern of our lives.

Looking back, I see now how I could have improved my own effort in several areas. My father gave me piano lessons for several years, but he eventually gave up when I was about twelve as a result of my poor practice attitude. I've always rationalised this by saying that whenever I did practice, Dad would tend to come in to the room and the practice became another lesson. But perhaps I'm being unfair on Dad. Its certainly one of my main regrets, because I would love to be able to play the piano now.

Education is another areas where my efforts were below par. My parents always supported my education, and I really should have put more effort into my schoolwork at the right time. Supposedly having the ability, but not the will, my O-level and A-level performances were disappointing, although I recovered some credibility when I re-took my A levels a year later. I spent too much time socialising and messing around, not realising the importance of the situation. I then decided to take a two-year HND Business Studies course, the idea being I could gain a qualification in two years that would meet the criteria of job advertisements, i.e. "degree or HND", and then begin work in what would have been the third year of a degree course. I suppose that this was more of a pragmatic approach than academic, and in hindsight was very short term because I seemed to have spent the following years explaining why I didn't have a degree. However, at the time, the strategy worked, and I began my working career in 1978.

When talking about work, I have for as long as I can remember done things that can be described as work. As a young child, I helped at home, doing things like tidying the sideboard drawers and sorting out toys. More activities took place when I was an older child. I did most of the gardening at home, and from time to time other jobs with a little more responsibility and planning needed, for instance, reseeding the lawn or mending broken fences. My father was very good at decorating, and I helped out as well. By the time I was thirteen, I was doing quite a few things around the house, and the idea of 'getting things in order' seemed to be prevalent.

The next major step in terms of work came at the age of fourteen, when I started earning money as a cleaner in a local manufacturing company. During the ages of seventeen to twenty one, I had a number of jobs that helped me to manage my finances during school and college. Labouring on building sites, house painting, working in a brick factory were all manual jobs which helped me stay fit and taught me how to handle different types of people to those I was used to. Living in a small community, most people knew each other, and through contacts, I managed to move from job to job. During this time, my social life was increasing and what I earned was usually soon spent. I had to earn my money but never went into debt. I was brought up on the Mr Micawber principle - "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery." - a maxim which pretty much holds to this day.

In terms of relaxing and hobbies, my activities as a youngster included a love of history, making Airfix historical models, astronomy, my train set, riding my bike on the roads over the moors, all of which are activities which I generally did on my own. I had several close friends at junior school, and took part in games and other group activities, but I could always revert back to doing things by myself, happy with my own company. In my early teenage years, my circle of friends extended – I was a scout, part of a Youth Fellowship group linked with the local Methodist chapel, and a new secondary school brought me into contact with other children from different parts of Keighley. Activities such as youth hostelling in the Lake District or North Wales, trips to the Dales, canal holidays, starting to go to music concerts, travelling to Leeds to watch United and, of course, out in the local pubs and clubs, became the focus of my attention. This phase of my life was important. I met different types of people and saw how they lived and realised that things could be different for me. I had my first ‘proper’ girlfriend at this stage, went abroad for the first time on the student Inter Rail ticket travelling around Europe for a month when I was 18 and then again the year after, and hobbies became passions – music and Leeds United – which would stay with me until the present.

### **Later Years**

The earlier formative years of my life are the foundations upon which my later years were built, and many of the characteristics of my personality and the influences from my family, friends and environments took place during these years. Moving into my mid-twenties, my life became focussed around two areas – my family and work.

There was never any doubt that I would have a family of my own. Making the transition from being single to married seemed to work pretty seamlessly. I met my wife Sue in 1982 whilst working in Leatherhead – Sue worked at the local commercial photographers in the town who worked on some of our sales and advertising materials. We were married in 1983, having relocated to Bolton as a result of my new job working in Liverpool. We are very much alike in our ambitions and activities; as the years have moved on, we have concluded that our relationship has become stronger. Sue has supported me through several difficult times, and has always been willing to change our family circumstances if required, either through my company or relocation moves. I love Sue very much, and we have, for most of the time, a happy marriage. The remaining time has not been happy mainly because of two issues. First, if I have had too much to drink, which I can on certain occasions, and end up being a pain, and secondly, issues concerning our children. James is twenty-two, Kate nineteen and Gabrielle nine. Three strong minded, intelligent and, if I say it myself, not bad looking children. In reverse order, Gabrielle is constantly on the move, doing activities, talking and having a go at things. Academically, she is excellent. So far so good. Kate is now at Manchester University studying Fashion Buying and Marketing, no doubt as a result of her visits on work experience to Peacocks over the years. Kate is more practical than academic, and has to work at her studies. But she gets on with things, generally, and can quickly become a key member of the group she is with. On her last visit to Peacocks she designed a series of Mens t-shirts, which have now gone into production, coming up with the design, working with the supplier, gaining approval to go ahead and following the project through. Kate is now, slowly, coming out of the teenage years, where there has been considerable friction between herself and her Mum about clothes and make up!

James is different. A very intelligent and polite person, he has always been a dreamer. His passion since the age of eleven has been to be a rock star. Nothing wrong in that, but unfortunately other aspects of his life have not progressed as well as they could have. Academically, James has underachieved all along. Although passing ten GCSE's all A to C, he could have been in the all A or A star group. James is a very determined, some would say stubborn, in his attitude to things and tends not to listen to others. This is fine if you know what you are doing, but when James was fifteen, he started smoking cannabis. His personality changed overnight, becoming insular and uncooperative. Although Sue and I tried to stop him, it was to no avail. But this was to go deeper. Unfortunately for James, and for the rest of the family, James is one of those people who is susceptible to the effect of cannabis through having psychotic experiences. He struggled though his A levels, and then a year off staying with friends in Cardiff. And all through this time we went through horrendous episodes, arguments and upset. As we became more concerned, James became more obstructive, so sure that he knew what he was doing. He then had a first year at Goldsmiths College, London, but by then his situation was not good. He had also started excessive drinking on a regular basis. He failed his first year coursework and examinations, yet he was convinced that he could go back for a second year. The situation called for professional help, and James spent a period of time under private treatment and observation. His situation has greatly improved over the last eighteen months, but he is likely to be on medication for some time to come. There are some positive signs moving forward. He is hoping to start a degree in music technology this Autumn having sat an A level in the subject this year, and he has just finished recording a cd of some of the music he has written over the last few years. But there is still a worry in terms of general motivation and his understanding of how the world works outside of his own perspective. This situation with James has tested the resolve of Sue and I to the extreme. It is very difficult to explain to someone else just exactly what had gone on – if you saw James now he looks fine, and did actually through most of the last few years. And when compared with other families who have worse situations to deal with, then we are grateful that we are where we are. Nevertheless, when you love someone, as we do with James, you have to deal with the situation that you are faced with.

I often reflect on my life as it is today and despite some of the issues outlined above, realise that I am very fortunate. We are a close family and enjoy being together. We have a very comfortable life, live in a very nice house which Sue runs and organises all of us and we have a busy social life with family and friends. There's always something going on involving at least one of us in the family, so life is interesting.

And the activity which supports the domestic side is the work side.

I have spent my working life in marketing, a field that seemed to reflect my own academic strengths, together with my practical orientation. I was certainly influenced by members of the family who worked in business in varying roles, and the advertised jobs sounded exciting and well paid. And so it began. Work has had many influences on my life, with the many of the changes on my life, for instance where I lived, resulting from my career. And within the work itself, there have been a wide variety of experiences and situations that I have observed or been part of which have influenced my attitude to and my behaviours at work.

My first job after college in 1979 was with a small company that manufactured craft and gift products. I had been staying at my uncles' house in Slough, and I saw the position for a marketing assistant advertised in the local paper. This gave me some valuable work experience from which I then moved on nine months later to a well known consumer goods company, Smith and Nephew Cosmetics, in Surbiton as an Assistant Brand Manager, working on a number of cosmetic brands including the Sally Hansen Nail Care range. The job was interesting, exciting and I saw for the first time the various functions and relationships between departments within a company. I also saw myself establishing relationships with different types of people within the company, and I got a taste of the political dimensions at work as well. I knew that I had made the right choice in joining the company; dealing with the American partners, out and about at sales meetings, developing advertising campaigns with our agency (Saatchi and Saatchi) all proved to be invaluable experience. After two years, another valuable lesson was learnt. The 'external' world can have a dramatic effect on your career and life. The holding company that owned the cosmetics division decided to sell some of the brands to Max Factor and amalgamate them into their marketing teams, which unfortunately left me looking for another job. I joined Ashe Laboratories in Leatherhead as a senior product manager, again working on a range of toiletries and cosmetics. But I did not enjoy my time here. The people were odd, my bosses power driven and ultra-political, attitudes were old fashion, the products boring, no planning and a negative and pessimistic culture. Maybe it was me rather than them. I wanted to give it a go, but it didn't work out. Of course, I do know why I went to Ashe - that's where I met my wife Sue. So off we went to live in Bolton and I took up my new job at Barker and Dobson, a long established sugar confectionery business, in Liverpool. Here, the atmosphere and attitudes were more positive, yet this was set against a background of an overall decline in the company's fortunes. The sugar confectionery market was declining, and the major manufacturers were being rationalised. The main impetus of a new strategy was the launch of new chocolate products into a market dominated by Mars, Cadbury and Rowntrees. Dime Bar was launched in 1984, and was a great success. The enthusiasm within the business was down to a few people, most notably the chief executive, and he was something of a mentor to me, especially in terms of dealing with people and rapidly changing markets. Unfortunately, the external changes were so significant that the company was restructured with a rationalisation of the number of factories and consequent job losses. These changes were unsettling and it was clear that yet another circle was turning in my career, and another change for me. I really enjoyed working at Barker and Dobson; I liked the people and made some good friends and the importance of teamwork and having fun was clear. Yet again, forces beyond my control were influencing my career, a fact that required managing through another period of change. I moved to work for Campbells Soups at their frozen food division in Manchester. As a US owned multinational, the culture was more bureaucratic and slow. I worked on the launch of new frozen food products, a further example of a trend that was developing in my career - developing new products that take a company into new markets, a process which inevitably leads to enormous changes. In fact, I was eventually relocated to the head office in Reading, another move for my family, which now included a young James. There was a high degree of competition between the people working on the new frozen food ranges who seemed to be more entrepreneurial and team oriented, with the older ambient side of the business who were more traditional and slow to initiate, which became a highly political atmosphere. Campbells America then bought another frozen food company in the UK,

Freshbake, in order to buy some critical mass in the market. This was a classic clash of completely different cultures: Campbells as the quality, strategic, marketing, advertising led company versus Freshbake as the commodity, trading and tactical company. This was a difficult time for me and the environment was getting worse - people leaving, the offices to be relocated again. I decided to move to the retail sector and joined Littlewoods Stores, part of the huge Littlewoods Organisation, based in Liverpool. These in turn lead to another move north as a family, and this time Kate had joined us.

Now here was an interesting company. The Stores Division had a culture that was a cross between the civil service, army and the 1950's - old fashioned, ultra political, power based, top down, bureaucratic and slow to react. The company was in the middle of setting up a new marketing department, and actually, quite a lot was achieved despite the staid environment, and many new and innovative ideas were developed and implemented in the food departments, for which I was responsible for. This was a really enjoyable period and I learnt a lot about retailing and I was able to use my natural skills of planning, development and research. I enjoyed the retail environment and the closeness to the customers. This was just right for my passion for service and the need to achieve high standards of excellence. But as ever, there were down sides, and as the years went by these became more prevalent. There was no investment available to take the initiatives forward and my role became more administrative and dull. Many other changes were taking place, and the company decided to sell its food space to Iceland Frozen Foods. I had already left by then, which was by 'mutual consent', armed with a large cheque. Looking back, the biggest frustration was that I did not have total control over the marketing function and this led to problems of responsibility and ownership. I was determined not to be in that position again.

The next three and a half years was the most difficult period of my life because I did not have a full time job and regular income. It was unplanned, and the insecurity and lack of control was a new experience for me. After leaving Littlewoods, I thought that it would be relatively easy to get a new job. But I was wrong. If I knew in April 1992 that it would take over three years to get another job, I don't know what I would have done.

I was too relaxed at first. I should also have started my new job campaign whilst still at Littlewoods. As the months became years I had to draw upon my reserves of strength, determination, optimism and belief in myself. The alternative to not successfully getting another job did not bear thinking about. The comparison with my fathers change in fortune in his mid-thirties was too close.

My time was filled by the job search (a full time job in itself), MBA and Diploma in Marketing studies, several consultancy projects, some manual type jobs, networking and PC training. Overall, my aim was to carry on working hard and waiting for that bit of luck or fate to come along. I knew it would one day. Of course, I was not the only one in this difficult situation. Sue, James and Kate had to be considered. It was difficult at times to convince Sue that I was doing the right thing, but she was very supportive throughout the period although I knew she had serious doubts. This type of change was different to that I had experienced before and looking back I am proud of the way I handled it, keeping my self esteem and optimism.

So, after three and a half years, I began work at Peacocks. I'm not going to say much about my time at the company here because there is plenty to come in the following chapters. Suffice to say, I am still at Peacocks twelve years on, having contributed to and seen change on a massive scale over that period of time. I have been fortunate to have been part of a management buyout a few years ago which has now materialised and given me a choice as to my future which I could have only dreamed about when I was unemployed. However, putting my feet up doesn't seem to ring true for me – I'll be sticking around in Peacocks for a bit longer yet.

In summary, I think that my life demonstrates a reasonably diverse fifty years of experiences - not wildly dynamic or unusual, nor too restrictive or narrow, but sufficient to demonstrate my experience in a variety of situations. Change has been a feature of my life so far, either through my own decisions or as a response to external circumstances. My actions and responses built a pattern of behaviour through which I managed those past changes and which will influence me in present and future change situations. Those behaviours are a product of my personality, my childhood, early adulthood and the influences of family, friends and work colleagues. Given this background, I bring certain behaviours and attitudes to my workplace, which I can trace back to my earlier years. Indeed, I bring myself to the workplace, good and bad, old and new. I am very interested in the feelings and motivations, past and present, which have led me to where I am today - fifty years of experiences and situations, with others or on my own, have built my actions, beliefs and motivations.

## **Appendix 2**

### **YOUR VIEWS ON MY LEADERSHIP & CHANGE PRACTICE**

- thank you for agreeing to take part in my interview
- the interview forms part of the first phase of research required to examine my leadership and change practice
- I will be interviewing various colleagues at different levels within the company
- The purpose is to discuss me at work in Peacocks. Your views will form part of my research so that I can understand how my attitudes, values and behaviours influence how I work.
- I need to know about my strengths and weaknesses, the good bits and the bad bits, so that I can try and improve where I can.
- The course I am studying is about leadership and change, so it would be very useful to get your views on these aspects
- I would also like to know about anything else that you consider is relevant when thinking about Richard Antrum at work
- You can also talk about how the business is changing and how you see my role within that process
- The interview may last for about an hour
- You only need your thoughts at the interview – nothing else to prepare
- The interview will be recorded and then transcribed
- The interview will then be analysed and themes identified
- Honest feedback is essential – (I have a thick skin!)
- Real life examples will help where possible
- The interview is open ended – no set agenda – although I will be prompting certain areas towards the end of the interview if the points have not been previous covered
- One way of starting the interview would be as if you were describing me to someone else
- I plan to repeat the interview in about a year
- Thank you and see you soon



Richard

### Appendix 3

#### Follow Up Interview Re. My Practice at Work

- Following the first interview last year, I had an enormous amount of data to work with
- My analysis has begun and there are a number of key points that are already evident
- These are as follows (in no priority order):
  - MANAGEMENT STYLE
  - TEAM
  - STRATEGIST
  - EMPOWERMENT
  - RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPERIORS
  - ROLE AS LEADER OF THE MARKETING DEPARTMENT
  - COMMUNICATION
  - LEADERSHIP
  - MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE
  - CONFRONTATION/CONFLICT
  - CULTURE
  - CUSTOMER ORIENTATION/SERVICE
- The purpose of this second interview is to again discuss my overall practice at work with the same approach as the first interview
- However, I would like your views on the key points listed above that are a result of the first round of interviews
- I would also like your views on whether any aspect of my practice has change recently
- Again, I would like the good bits and the bad bits, so please do not hold back
- The interviews will be recorded again and may last for about an hour, depending on what you have to say now that you are more familiar with the process
- Real life examples will help where possible
- The interview is open ended – no set agenda – although I will be prompting certain areas towards the end of the interview if the points have not been previously covered

- One way of starting the interview would be to discuss some of the point noted above
- Thank you and see you soon

Richard