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THE DARK SIDE IN LEADERSHIP
A CRITICAL SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Executive Summary

This report explores the “dark” side in leadership, the effects of which can eclipse the positive or “light” side, sometimes at great cost to organizations and wider society. This tendency to divide issues into conflicting or contrasting pairs is useful as it helps us to see the world more sharply, but it can also act like blinkers to limit or distort reality. Both – the tendency to divide into contrasting pairs and to distort reality – are evident in leadership, exemplified by the metaphor “dark side of leadership.” This term is typically associated with personal cost incurred by an individual in accepting leadership responsibility or with risks to the organization from personal (dark) attributes of the leader. Yet, as this report suggests, such a focus on the rational leader is a partial and potentially misleading way to explain dark (deviant or flawed) leadership. Rather, from a critical social perspective, it is argued that the dark side is inherent in the wider process of leadership involving interactions across three levels – individual, group and social structure – that collectively are integral to enacting effective leadership. This critique’s intent is not to reject outright the explanatory value of the concept of the dark side or to seek primarily to insulate us from the potential dark effects of leadership. Rather, it is about two things: first, to acknowledge the scale of the problem; and second, to reformulate the concept of the dark side away from its current imagery to one that also embraces the influence of collective behaviour and recognizes the frustrating dynamics at the organizational level that can, despite good intentions, result in serious unintended consequences. Overall, if we continue to think of leadership failure as primarily a result of ill-conceived actions by a gifted, though flawed individual, or a less capable individual, we are unlikely to come up with policies and strategies to address the issue, as we have already misunderstood the problem. Conversely, by grasping the complexity of the leadership activity space, we might see how inherent individual biases, as well as the effects of group dynamics and other structural influences, exert a collective influence that can sometimes derail even well-intentioned actions.

Le rapport en rubrique, Dark Side of Leadership, explore le côté « sombre » du leadership, dont les effets peuvent éclipser le côté positif ou « éclairé », causant parfois un préjudice considérable aux organisations et à la société en général. La tendance à

diviser les problèmes en paires contradictoires ou contrastantes est utile d'un certain point de vue, car une nette dichotomie aide à voir le monde avec plus d'acuité, mais l'approche peut également agir comme des œillères et limiter ou déformer l'appréciation de la réalité. Or, les tandems mal assortis et les distorsions de la réalité sont justement les constantes du leadership que la métaphore du « côté sombre » cherche à illustrer. Le terme est normalement associé au préjudice personnel subi par un individu qui accepte des fonctions de leader ou aux risques encourus par une organisation en raison des défauts personnels de son leader. Pourtant, comme le suggère le rapport, prétendre que le côté sombre (déviant ou défectueux) du leadership est dû à l'importance exagérée que l'on accorde aux leaders rationnels me semble une explication incomplète et potentiellement trompeuse. Si l'on adopte une perspective sociale critique, on maintiendrait plutôt que ce « côté sombre » est inhérent au processus même du leadership, lequel implique des interactions entre trois niveaux – l'individu, le groupe et la structure sociale – qui, collectivement, font partie intégrante d'un leadership efficace. Mon intention, dans ce résumé, n'est pas de rejeter catégoriquement la valeur explicative de la notion de « côté sombre » ni de chercher à nous protéger de ses effets négatifs potentiels. En fait, je me suis fixé pour but, premièrement, de reconnaître l'envergure du problème et, deuxièmement, de reformuler la notion de « côté sombre » du leadership en substituant à son imagerie actuelle des images mentales qui tiennent compte de l'influence des comportements collectifs et de la dynamique organisationnelle. On sait que cette dynamique souvent frustrante peut, malgré les meilleures intentions, engendrer de sérieuses conséquences tout à fait involontaires. En fin de compte, si nous continuons de penser que l'échec du leadership résulte principalement d'actions mal conçues par un individu doué, mais non sans défauts, ou par un individu moins compétent, il y a peu de chance que nous arrivions à formuler des politiques et des stratégies aptes à régler le problème, puisqu'à l'évidence nous ne l'avons pas compris. Par contre, si nous saisissons bien la complexité du champ d'activité où s'exerce le leadership, nous verrions comment les partis pris inhérents à un individu, les effets de la dynamique de groupe et d'autres influences structurelles possèdent une influence collective pouvant parfois faire dévier même les actions les mieux intentionnées.

Introduction

Leadership, described as a contextual, social process ¹ that facilitates collective action towards a common goal, is a key driver of performance. Not surprisingly, the subject attracts a great deal of excitement and interest. In the following discussion, the emphasis is on “leadership” because it deals with emotions, trust and relationships in an environment where managing change ² is stressed, although the enduring “managerial” emphasis on stability and control cannot ever be discounted. Reflecting the diversity of opinion on leadership, some suggest that we still have little real knowledge of what is effective leadership.³ Typically, the image is of powerful, dynamic individuals who command victorious armies, shape national events or direct corporate empires, people such as Jack Welch, Chief Executive Officer of General Electric,⁴ and South Africa’s Nelson Mandela. Conversely, what does one make of Adolf Hitler, Nazi Germany and the “destructive dynamism” of Auschwitz?⁵ Less obvious, what might we also make of General Moshe Dayan, a great military leader, but also a tomb robber who built an extensive private collection of archaeological relics largely from illicit digs across Israel, the Palestinian territories and Egypt?⁶

This report explores the “dark” side in leadership, the effects of which can eclipse the positive or “light” side, sometimes at great cost to organizations and wider society. This tendency to divide issues into conflicting or contrasting pairs is useful as it helps us to see the world more sharply, but it can also act like blinkers to limit or distort reality.⁷ Both, the tendency to divide into contrasting pairs and to distort reality are evident in leadership, exemplified by the metaphor “dark side of leadership.” This term is typically associated with either personal cost incurred by an individual in accepting leadership

responsibility (such as demands on time, loss of privacy, unreasonable public criticism, threats and like effects) or with risks to the organization from personal (dark) attributes of the leader. Yet, as this report suggests, such a focus on the rational⁸ leader is a partial and potentially misleading way to explain dark (deviant or flawed) leadership. Rather, taking a critical social perspective, it is argued that the dark side is inherent in the wider process of leadership involving interactions across three levels – individual, group and social structure – that collectively are integral to enacting effective leadership.⁹

The purpose of this critique, then, is not to reject outright the explanatory value of the concept of the dark side or to seek primarily to insulate us from the potential dark effects of leadership. Rather, it is about two things. First, to acknowledge the scale of the problem – witness the recent global financial crisis and the loss of trust in corporate leaders and even public regulatory agencies charged with watching them. Second, it is to reformulate the concept of the dark side away from its current imagery to one that also embraces the influence of collective behaviour and recognizes the frustrating dynamics at the organizational level that can, despite good intentions, result in serious unintended consequences. Overall, the reality of balancing stability with desired creativity in a complex environment, complicated by a growing interdependence of local, national and global issues, gives new meaning to the suggestion that ‘there are no easy answers for leaders.’ Consequently, if we continue to think of leadership failure as primarily a result of ill-conceived actions by a gifted, though flawed individual or a less capable individual, we are unlikely to come up with policies and strategies to address the problem, as we have already misunderstood the problem. Conversely, by grasping

the complexity of the leadership activity space, we might see how inherent individual biases, as well as the effects of group dynamics and other structural influences, exert a collective influence that can derail even well intentioned actions.

A Critique of Leadership Performance

As the earlier references to Hitler and Dayan intimate, there is a need for caution in the tendency to depict leaders as paragons of virtue and in assigning leaders an exalted range of attributes when critiquing their leadership performance.¹⁰ Similarly, whether we call Napoleon, or his twentieth-century counterpart Hitler, a hero or a monster is relative; basically, it is not easy to define a clear position and perspectives can vary with time.

These definitional issues aside, a difficulty in critiquing leadership performance, for both novice and experienced assessors, is that this subject is richer and more complex than it is possible to express from any one perspective. As Amanda Sinclair noted, leadership as a field of study “privileges the heroic tale” while reducing critical inspection of structural causes or limitations.¹¹ In trying to critique leadership performance, a start point then is to realize that the traditional view of leadership (as primarily a top-down process) arguably perpetuates the myth of an infallible, all-knowing (usually male) leader. This view, overtly reinforced by the metaphor of the “dark” side, which is associated with the individual and their fallibilities, distorts the complex reality of leadership. In explaining dark effects or failure, it also invites a “kind-of-person” explanation of deviant behaviour associated with weird or unusual and “other” people, people such as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Robert Mugabe (in Zimbabwe) and Kenneth

Lay (Enron Corporation); similarly, to take a purely military example, why someone like General Friedrich Paulus at Stalingrad might through blind obedience to Hitler's orders commit the 6th Army, comprising some 250,000 men, to certain destruction in November 1942.

Leadership – From a Top-Down Process to a Symbiotic Relationship

An alternative approach to a top-down process view is to see leadership as reflective of a symbiotic relationship between leader and followers within a given social group. Thus, rather than a relationship based on authority, it is about trust and understanding the opinions of followers, which in turn requires dialogue about what the group stands for and how it should act.¹² This description of leadership provides some useful criteria by which to evaluate leadership and critique leadership failure. For example: leader traits seen as most desirable will depend on the nature of the group being led; a “common us” or social identity helps shape group behaviour and enable consensus; influence over the group is by the one who best reflects the social identity of that group; and the need by leaders for an intimate understanding of group psychology.¹³

Leadership as a symbiotic relationship goes beyond long held guiding basics of stereotyping, categorization into “in and out” groups, and homogeneity.¹⁴ Useful concepts include social identity,¹⁵ influencing tactics, power, politics and negotiation. To illustrate, “social exchange theory” explains how power is lost or gained as a reciprocal influence process involving an exchange of favours and benefits over time, while “reciprocity” introduces obligation and alliances that can be used to achieve

objectives.¹⁶ Both concepts also add a manipulative, negative connotation to power that lends weight to the adage “absolute power corrupts absolutely.”¹⁷ In terms of shaping behaviour, “group agency” reflects the ability by groups to enact goal-directed behaviour, as well as influence other groups and individuals towards desired outcomes,¹⁸ while attribution of performance to either external (resource) or internal (trait, motivation, ability) factors on a selective basis identifies a socialized bias towards explaining things in terms of individual disposition, rather than situation.¹⁹

Moreover, relevant insights from collective behaviour include team cohesiveness, which as we know can have a major positive effect on behaviour, but can also impose social pressures as illustrated in the experiments by Solomon Asch in 1952 and Stanley Milgram in 1963 – conformity and a capacity for individuals to inflict considerable pain on others.²⁰ Similarly, two other well-known collective influences, “groupthink” and “escalation of commitment,” are both associated with sub-optimal decision-making,²¹ typically illustrated by the Vietnam War. An apt contemporary example is the declarative statements (in the intelligence communities) on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction just before the invasion in 2003. More generally, “herding” identifies a tendency for people to mimic one another and cause irrational collective behaviour (such as a selling frenzy on the stock market),²² while “deindividuation,” characterised by poor self-monitoring, less concern with social approval, increased impulsivity and reduced capacity for rational thinking, tells us that the larger the group, the higher the degree of anonymity and the stronger the likelihood of antisocial responses.²³ Against this contextual background, tests on “collective behaviour in an emergency” suggest that when groups have an option of aggressive behaviour, many fall into a negative spiral of aggression that

stimulates more aggression. This behaviour is more prevalent in large groups, though once competitive and aggressive norms are formed in a small group, results suggest that behaviour in these groups becomes more severe than in large groups.²⁴

While we cannot readily extrapolate individual behaviour to the group and wider organization, it is clear there are many uncertainties in the relationship between individual and group. In the context of the dark side, as military history will readily attest, the relationship can permit, even encourage, acts of aggression or vengeance that individuals would never commit or tolerate morally on their own.²⁵ The interplay between personal choice and interpersonal exchange and the emergence of subsequent norms,²⁶ however, also identify ways to influence behaviour. Thus, while leadership failure may appear immediate and personal – such as betrayal of trust, lack of courage and the like – there are potential opportunities when one looks at underlying systemic issues and group dynamics that reflect either anxiety and frustration or an underlying hidden rationality to collective behaviour.²⁷ Conversely, to defer responsibility to a leader or disembody “them” reflects the potential for learned helplessness²⁸ or the tendency to abdicate responsibility and remain inactive. Either way, given the scope of the contemporary challenge facing leaders and organizations, like the proverbial frog in a pot of increasingly hot water, the consequences of not doing anything is to only risk collective disaster.

The Leadership Challenge

Leadership is a persistent, but elusive theme in literature. The last decade is described as seeing the emergence of a complex information society²⁹ and a

significantly changed role for senior executives.³⁰ There is also suggestion of a “new model for leadership” involving learning, change, cultural identity and society;³¹ related literature advocates the concept of a learning organization, the hallmark of which includes managing a constant tension between stability and creative transformation by being flexible and embracing change.³² The common issue is ambiguity and dynamic (as opposed to detailed) complexity.³³ Conventional forecasting, planning and analysis methods are not equipped to deal with dynamic complexity. Unfortunately, while we need to look for patterns and interrelationships, most “systems analyses” (such as simulations)³⁴ focus on detail complexity. This is the reason, as we often hear and perhaps readily say, that there are few ready answers to many of the problems facing leaders. It might also explain the drive by companies to invest heavily in developing their employees – although, one should also ask towards ends (goals) and by what means (methods). The same impetus and paradoxical challenge is true for the military, where Australian Army doctrine explicitly endorses the capacity to challenge and change the *status quo* ... to risk, innovate and experiment.³⁵

The drive to find new and better ways to do things also introduces several competing interests or paradoxical³⁶ challenges. Primarily, the issue is of balancing command authority (and control) with the coexisting need for speed (and freedom of action). There are other tensions also, reflected in the competing needs for: stability and habitual responses, as well as flexibility; fresh ideas and innovation; greater individual autonomy without a sense of isolation from the wider community; and the capacity to grasp details, while being simultaneously mindful of the big picture.³⁷ Leadership is clearly a daunting responsibility and the reality is that leaders often need to make

choices that risk them being damned if they do and damned if they don't. This dilemma is well illustrated by President L.B. Johnson's decision to send U.S. Marines into Vietnam in 1965, with White House tape recordings revealing him saying to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara: "My answer is yes, but my judgment is no."³⁸

Part of this decision-making dilemma can be explained by "bounded rationality" that identifies an inability to process all the information needed to solve complex problems and subsequently offers a model of "satisficing" over maximizing benefits.³⁹ Another aspect of the problem relates to the less appreciated, but central role of emotions (including fear) in decision-making.⁴⁰ The issue is not about poor reasoning, but that people act intuitively in response to the situation and what is natural and intuitive in a given situation is not the same for everyone as different cultural experiences favour different intuitions. Daniel Kahneman also identifies what he describes as loss aversion, a tendency for people to respond differently to options describing gains than those that refer to losses.⁴¹ Thus, in decision-making, while choice may be logically equivalent, it may not be psychologically equivalent, with people more motivated to avoid losses than secure gains.⁴² Collectively, the challenge of paradox is a kind of contemporary corporate equivalent to Joseph Conrad's "heart of darkness."⁴³ Faced alone, without open debate and a supportive organizational ethos, it is easy to see how inherently competing interests and collective (unconscious) behaviours can enmesh and take the leader, organization and country progressively deeper into the morass.

Leadership Failure

Not unsurprisingly then, but in stark contrast to the high hopes vested in inspired leadership, the past decade has seen a series of scandals that may well have been scripted from the Mad Hatter's tea party.⁴⁴ To the parade of personal failings through shoddy dealings and double standards,⁴⁵ one can add corporate failures such as Enron, Hollinger International and Tyco in the U.S., Parmalat in Italy, and the National Australia Bank and building products manufacturer James Hardie in Australia. On the political stage, the intractable conflict in Darfur (in the Sudan) and the breakdown of law and order in Zimbabwe are continuing examples of abuse of people by their leaders, compounded by a failure of the United Nations (UN) and other agencies to do anything beyond issue ineffectual condemnation.⁴⁶ In Australia, the manipulation of truth in the "children overboard" controversy⁴⁷ in 2001 debased the then-government and embroiled senior leaders of the defence fraternity in a professionally and personally damaging debate over evidence that asylum seekers threw their children overboard. The Abu Ghraib prisoner-abuse scandal in Iraq in 2004⁴⁸ similarly implicated both senior and junior U.S. military personnel in what was reportedly not an isolated event, but a troubling pattern of abuse in Iraq and beyond.⁴⁹

It would seem that there is considerable evidence of recurring failure of leadership in many areas of endeavour. Consistent with Maurice Punch's analysis of corporate misconduct, what appears to emerge is an unsympathetic, even deviant, portrait of the leadership ethos.⁵⁰ Consequently, recognizing the great truth held in the axiom "an analysis that portrays a phenomenon as bizarre or strange has failed to understand that phenomenon,"⁵¹ there is cause for some urgent stocktaking.

The Dark Side Metaphor

When Jay Conger first discussed the notion of the “dark side of leadership,” he asked: “How do leaders produce such negative outcomes – and why?”⁵² The term in its literal use indicates one of two distinct aspects to an activity or person. Thus, we have a light or positive, healing benevolent side and a dark or negative, destructive, aggressive side associated with most social activity. Some representative examples of the latter include: competition and wage loss as a consequence of globalisation; industrial accidents as a result of growth and development; and violence and addiction associated with drug use.

The dark side is also used figuratively as a metaphor for the shadowy or hidden and unknown aspects of a person or activity. Hence, for example, the statement attributed to Vice President Dick Cheney soon after 9/11: “...We have to work the dark side, if you will. Spend time in the shadows of the intelligence world.”⁵³ An example of this metaphor in action is the use of “extraordinary renditions,” a practice in which terrorist suspects are snatched from one country and sent to another, often to face “tough interrogation” techniques. Another contemporary example is the domestic eavesdropping program by the U.S. National Security Agency to monitor U.S. citizens calling overseas terrorist suspects without the requisite approvals from appropriate courts.

What these two examples of “shadowy” work illustrate is another attribute of the dark side analogy – of serious “unintended costs” or consequences that can accompany explicit actions or policy choices. In the decision to monitor phone calls by citizens, for example, as the U.S. and wider public are now discovering, the action subverts control

processes set-up after another significant leadership failure, the 1970s Watergate crisis, and so unwittingly a failure to learn an earlier “lesson.” The accidental shooting down of an Iranian civilian aircraft (Flight 655) by U.S.S. Vincennes in July 1988 shows a more direct (unintended) consequence of competing interests and a collusive in-group ethos. The official story surrounding this regrettable incident was of an American warship minding its own business. The real story, however, involved an undeclared war in which the U.S. was, ironically, *de facto* allies of Saddam Hussein and Iraq in its war against Iran and a subsequent unfortunate chain of events set in motion by decoy distress transmissions from a phantom Liberian merchant vessel, organized by U.S. forces in the region, to lure out Iranian gunboats from the islands in the Strait of Hormuz.⁵⁴

Yet, when Conger first used the term “dark side of leadership,” his purpose was far simpler. It was to identify three skill deficiencies – the leaders’ vision, their communication and impression-management skills, and their general management skills – that purportedly explained workplace failure.⁵⁵ In contrast to this skills focus, Kets de Vries introduced personality and psychological stress into the dark side metaphor by questioning the motives behind people becoming leaders.⁵⁶ The focus here is on deviance located in narcissism, an essential stage in infantile development that contributes to self-esteem and identity and through which all individuals pass (and some remain!). According to de Vries, an imbalance in development can leave some people fixated on such things as power, status, prestige and superiority. It is these underlying quirks of personality that can induce self-destructive behaviour by leaders to

the detriment of the organization or as de Vries says, to “snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory.”⁵⁷

Clearly, the metaphor of the dark side is centered primarily on the individual leader, and as noted earlier, provides a “kinds-of-people”⁵⁸ explanation that merges complex social issues into a simple explanation. This is akin to the tendency of suggesting a supernatural (deity, witch) or psychological (neurosis) explanation to explain an event in times of high anxiety.⁵⁹ This explanation may appeal for the comfort it offers by allowing a safe feeling within those of “us” who appear “normal,” but the overall utility of the concept is limited. To explain, any “explanatory” value based on past description and analysis suggests determinism or forces beyond the individual’s control. We need a better framework – one that offers strategies for the future in terms of ordered collective life and social identity – without denying the dark elements of human nature and the tendency to cooperate with evil that so often dominate life.⁶⁰

The Concept of the Dark Side – Extended

Assuming a dual purpose to the metaphor of the dark or negative side of leadership, of appreciating the complex challenges facing leadership, and offering strategies to foster effective leadership and counter or moderate dark (flawed) leadership, a useful starting point is Hannah Arendt’s observation on the “banality of evil”⁶¹ as she recounted the trial of Otto Adolf Eichmann, hanged for genocide in 1962.⁶² Her observation invites a critical look at current events and issues, either major ones like the most recent global financial crisis, political challenges in Rwanda, Darfur, Zimbabwe or Iraq,⁶³ or minor ones, such as policy decisions and pre-selection deals in

elections, even poor behaviour on and off the sporting fields. That some of these may in hindsight be viewed as acts of evil reflects the dynamic interplay of social context that can introduce unique possibilities for exploitation by, or exposure to the dark side. As Laurence Rees' observations from Auschwitz suggest, moreover, while some extraordinary people can act virtuously on occasions, collectively the prospects for virtuous behaviour are not good.⁶⁴

Rees' insights do offer some useful ideas to counter dark side influences. For instance, family is a powerful sustaining force; time and time again in Auschwitz it invoked "heroic acts" for the sake of a father, mother, brother, sister or child by those sent to the camps. Another example relates to the point that while everyone had choice in how to behave, Auschwitz demonstrated above all the overriding influence of situation over behaviour.⁶⁵ To these insights, we should also add the role of social realities. As John Mack notes, the social contract – "our tribal promise of timidity in exchange for the assurances of protection" – has deep and poorly understood emotional roots.⁶⁶ Examples include the fear of standing out or of risking criticism from the group, and a sense of helplessness that contributes to going along or non-participation as modes of adaptation.⁶⁷

Thus, on closer evaluation, there are a number of things that can get lost in simple black-and-white imagery. First, dark or deviant behaviour is not solely caused by individual factors; context is powerful, and as Toivi Blatt, a survivor of Sobibor, a Nazi extermination camp in Poland, remarks, any "of us could be good people or bad people in these [different] situations."⁶⁸ A corollary to this point is to appreciate the things that motivate humans, including the pathology of anxiety and hidden rationality to collective

behaviour embedded in the search for meaning and self-worth, for a sense of a world that is not out of control, for the consequent desire for survival (perhaps through power acquisition), and beyond these motives to a sense of moral goodness.⁶⁹ These motives are primary drivers in leadership, more so when both leader and followers are trying legitimately to help the organization or nation adapt and survive. They also identify ways and means to positively shape organizational forces.

Collectively, the influence of context and social realities, if ignored, leave us potentially blind to the impact of norms and of curious models of human motivation that shape both individual and collective behaviour. Conversely, by recognising causal links between situation and behaviour, we should see the utility of individual political initiative and of encouraging moral and ethical debate in terms of shaping behaviour (positively). As well, based on insights drawn from psychological literature,⁷⁰ it is clear that little things, and so small changes, can make as much (perhaps more) of a difference in effecting large-scale change, as big things. There is also an equal need for enabling structures. These include: formal (rules and procedures, governance and ethical codes) and informal (teams, social culture) control systems; reliable data sources to help separate fact from fiction; trusted social connections (relationships) to act as the glue when spreading the message; and credible sources (leaders) to persuade the less convinced of what they may be hearing or seeing.

We can now examine the dark side in leadership at three levels: the individual, leader-follower relationships and from a macro-level social perspective.

Dark Side – Individual Considerations

To paraphrase Joseph Campbell, to ignore the individual is to risk squeezing the “human will” out of life.⁷¹ The dark (in this context, negative) aspects of leadership responsibility at the individual level include such things as loneliness of command, envy, fear of loss of power or of success, as well as the sense of “what now” on having achieved a lifetime’s ambition. To this list we can add the price an individual may pay in pursuit of career advancement and success – mastery at all costs and consequent workaholic pattern of job performance. To the extent a leader is a champion of change, there will also always be costs inherent in steering an organization through change.⁷² These can range from actual physical danger through to lesser concerns such as a negative impact on reputation, career, or on institutional credibility, as well as the risk of looking indecisive if seeking to engage people, rather than solve all problems alone. Other costs or consequences, real and imagined, intended and unintended, at the individual level include such things as the fact that it may not always be easy to get the attention a person deserves on the way up or the anonymity one might crave once in the public eye or on the way down; the sense of failure or inadequacy that can accompany loss, being downsized or not having a contract renewed; and more typically in a hierarchy, the inherent risk of a leadership vacuum occurring behind a powerful leader.

Reflecting these costs, the price of success at the individual level can arguably involve great pressure and even outright failure. Given this problematic future, perhaps a less appreciated (and dark) consequence of leadership as it is currently conceived is for otherwise well-suited leaders to withdraw from the competition for status, choosing

lifestyle over continued participation in the “rat race.”⁷³ Yet, if the century ahead requires leaders in the best sense of the word, then organizations might want to revisit the implicit (heroic) meaning of leadership – of giving your life to something bigger than oneself.⁷⁴ The benefits of this notion, echoed in mythic stories from around the world, are twofold. First, it reminds us of the intrinsic moral objective in leadership. Second, it helps shift leadership practice and development effort away from models and theories to an emphasis on leader’s actions and to what James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner⁷⁵ describe as the timeless essence of leadership: challenging the process; sharing the vision; enabling others to act; modeling the way; and, encouraging the heart. These attributes, which overlap aspects of transformational leadership, provide further measures of leadership effectiveness. Conversely, given the reality that simple good intentions can “cause more unhappiness than plots of the most evil tendency,”⁷⁶ heroic leadership needs also to be anchored in everyday normal life by ethics, described by John Ralston Saul as the “least romantic, but most demanding of human qualities.” It is encapsulated in the idea of “responsible individualism” or ethics through individual responsibility, founded on a commitment to society and exercised by the attributes of common sense, imagination and memory.⁷⁷

Summarizing the general discussion at the individual level of leadership, there is a clear invitation to question the motives of people who seek leadership responsibility or people who operate out of self-interest and effect questionable, even immoral, action.⁷⁸ Ethical relativities aside, one issue that needs understanding is that while people may like to believe that their behaviour is a matter of morality, the reality in many cases is that we behave the way we do because of social circumstances.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, noting

the many poor examples of contemporary leaders, one may ask: “What kinds of leaders does the world need today?” Both “heroic leadership” in the sense of giving your life to something bigger than oneself and “responsible individualism” seem most apt as an individual performance benchmark within organizations.

Leader-Follower Relationships

Faced with a complex and uncertain environment and a limited capacity to intervene for reasons such as time and technical know-how, people in positions of leadership responsibility must rely on others. This is reflected in the practice of distributed leadership through teams and committees, and characterised by roles and behaviours that can be shared, rotated and used in a self-managed team environment.⁸⁰ Paradoxically, leaders at all times should remain responsible and accountable, which can be difficult particularly when circumstances turn bad such as in Abu Ghraib prison in 2004.⁸¹ In this example, as in other examples from history, it is more instructive to consider group and structural factors rather than focus on the individual leaders.

Explicit recognition of leader-follower relationships highlight the need on the one hand for cooperation, shared values and strong organizational commitment, and on the other hand, the potential for followers’ influence to either accentuate (or moderate) a leader’s shortcomings or (dark) actions. To illustrate, in the U.S.S.R. under Joseph Stalin, the effect was blind loyalty to the leader through coercion and power, which saw unchecked famine in the Ukraine in 1932-33 that cost millions of lives. Faced with the risk of death or exile and imprisonment in the Gulag camps of Siberia, there was a

perhaps understandable reluctance to convey bad news to Stalin.⁸² In the U.S., it was the charismatic influence of John F. Kennedy that contributed to “otherwise strong, self-reliant men and women being awed and seduced” with questionable impact on U.S. foreign policy.⁸³ Even without negative or destructive leadership influence, it is easy to see how the leader-follower relationship can become problematic. For example, followers who fail to (or are perceived to not) collaborate with their bosses can become targets or scapegoats, while a climate of dependency on the leader can kill independent thinking.⁸⁴ Confirming this tension, studies show a correlation between upward mobility and not telling the boss about problems – basically, you “go along to get along.”⁸⁵ Another manifestation of unhealthy leader-follower relationships is the tendency towards “groupthink,”⁸⁶ the result of excessive confidence by the group or by the leader tending to see and hear only what they want to see and hear. The cumulative effect either way of unhealthy leader-follower relationships is to lead people and organizations into risky ventures by not responding according to the realities of the situation.

An example from within the Australian Defence Forces of the dark side influence in leader-follower relationships involves the F-111 deseal/reseal problem at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Amberley.⁸⁷ By way of background, the fuel tanks on the F-111 aircraft needed to be comprehensively sealed to prevent leakage. To achieve this, a regular program was employed which involved the manual removal (deseal) and re-application (reseal) of material that prevented fuel leaking from the aircraft’s fuel tanks. Since the introduction of the F-111 aircraft into Australian service in 1973, both military and civilian personnel have completed four fuel tank repair programs. Due to the

health concerns raised by personnel, the deseal/reseal program was halted in January 2000 pending further investigation of occupational health and safety issues.

As the Board of Inquiry (BOI) in 2001 noted, this locally well-discussed logistics issue resulted in the extended exposure of maintenance personnel to toxic chemicals for some 20 years due to a variety of inadequacies in personal protective equipment and a reluctance to take matters higher-up the “chain of command.” Given a perceived operational requirement to get the job done, there was also, in terms of organizational mythology, a positive “can-do” response. Another influencing factor was the false expectation that workers should resolve things as far as possible at their level,⁸⁸ while their sense of relative powerlessness was reinforced by the absence of independent health and safety representatives and by a military command and discipline system that made collective resistance illegal. Thus, while workers did complain about their equipment and the symptoms from which they were suffering, when these were ignored they simply accepted the situation and got on with the job. There were contributing systemic factors as well,⁸⁹ but in terms of leader-follower relationships, a climate of dependency and a failure of independent thinking, in combination with a cultural tendency to put platforms ahead of people and a sense of powerlessness by workers, combined to accentuate RAAF leadership shortcomings at great cost to many individuals and the organization itself.⁹⁰ In acknowledging these failings, the BOI allowed that otherwise the organization (RAAF) would have seen greater effort to find engineering solutions to fuel tank leaks and/or a greater commitment to find non-toxic substances with which to do the job.

Enron Corporation shares many similarities with the RAAF example in terms of a climate of dependency, sense of powerlessness through lack of an independent auditor, and in this case, an escalating commitment to sustaining stock prices. What this example of leadership failure illustrates most of all, however, is an ethos of intimidation, covert operations and off-the-books transactions as a result of dishonest principals aided and abetted by employees.⁹¹ Thus Enron Corporation makes clear that it is hard to ignore the element of domination embedded in the personality of some leaders and the consequent effect of sycophancy in followers. What happens as a consequence in terms of leader-follower relationships is an incremental build-up of obligations in the informal system that can be as binding as the formal system, which leads to the creation of a duality in social life – between appearance and reality.⁹²

In summary, the sometimes covert and collusive practices anchored in the daily reality of organizational life reflect the pressure, expectations and mutual agreements symptomatic of people trying to survive, succeed or simply get things done. Within this context, leader-follower relationships can accentuate or moderate a leader's shortcomings and shape corporate ethos. A constant in this relationship is the tension between "formal" control and the "informal" creativity that is also needed by organizations as they seek to evolve and avoid stagnation. What leaders need, in addition to considerable mental agility, is a moral frame of reference and an effective formal control system to act as a safety net⁹³ to prevent a perhaps incremental negative spiral in collective behaviour. Moreover, like the RAAF case (that emphasized platforms over people), Enron Corporation illustrates systemic factors at play – the temptation to boost stock prices (a consistent feature of markets from the 1920s) and

provide exorbitant rewards to chief executives for company success.⁹⁴ Collectively, these reasons cause people to suggest that legal reforms to improve governance need also to be accompanied by formal control systems and a changed corporate ethos, else the past will most likely repeat itself.⁹⁵ Attention is now turned to the final level of analysis, social structures.

Macro-Level of Social Structures

This level of analysis is not easy to develop because, as one commentator has remarked, there is often less clarity on the roles of macro-level structures at the corporate level. The difficulty of entering the inner realities of business is often made harder by the protective layers of what is termed “impression management.”⁹⁶ After extensive examination of corporate behaviour, Punch concludes that “organisations are labyrinths of deceit” through pressures, dilemmas, contradictions and tensions that in turn produce lies, deception, moral ambiguity and devious role-playing.⁹⁷ This pessimistic view is not to deny the potential for trust, loyalty and collective enrichment. Rather, as typically exposed by a corporate collapse, litigation or a whistleblower, the point is that some rule breaking appears intrinsic to institutional life.

Sometimes, even when a company attempts to do the right thing, as in the example of Royal Dutch Shell in 1995 over the oil storage platform Brent Spar, it can end up in difficulties.⁹⁸ To explain, having applied for and received British governmental approval, the company intended to dispose of the platform by sinking it in the North Sea, disposal of the platform at sea being simpler (and cheaper) than on-shore dismantling. When Greenpeace forced a back-down, however, the company moved to

dispose of the facilities on-shore in Norway, and in turn, fell foul of local environmentalists who attacked the company for polluting Norway. Somewhat consistent with this failure to appreciate changing social moods, shortly after, Shell got itself into deeper trouble in Nigeria when the government executed nine local activists over a controversy involving Shell's mining rights.⁹⁹

In contrast to the somewhat benign example of Royal Dutch Shell, the evil seen in Auschwitz is also evident in the failed peacekeeping operation in Rwanda in 1994 where the UN peacekeeping force witnessed machete-wielding government-sponsored forces murder some 800,000 people in 100 days. After Rwanda, allowing he was let down, the UN Force Commander, Major-General Roméo Dallaire, took responsibility for what he termed "mission failure."¹⁰⁰ Yet, a closer examination of the event suggests Rwanda was a damning indictment of world leaders and UN bureaucrats who collectively failed to stop genocide.¹⁰¹ As with the Holocaust itself, Rwanda is consistent with other studies of genocide (today, like in the Sudan and Darfur) that reveal international intervention usually arrived too late to save many victims or was not furnished with the capabilities or the mandate to stop the killing.¹⁰²

What is also easily forgotten in this seeming indifference to genocide are the essential contextual influences. The earlier killing, for example, of 18 American soldiers on a peacekeeping mission in Somalia in October 1993 prompted a withdrawal of U.S. forces from that country and a consequential general reluctance toward humanitarian operations. As well, there was the matter of the earlier Rwandan civil war that had attracted an internationally brokered peace agreement and peacekeeping operation to monitor the accord. Less understood, perhaps, is the inadvertent contribution by this

earlier intervention to the tragedy in 1994; it reportedly created a fear of a return to domination by the Tutsi minority and to a sense that the accord was a sell-out.¹⁰³ Alan

Kuperman (in Benjamin Valentino) concludes:

Western powers pressured the Hutu government to sign a peace agreement that in effect handed over power to the opposing Tutsi rebels. This surrender threatened the vital interests of the entrenched extremist Hutu elite, who perceived the mass killing of the Tutsi as the only way to retain power and avoid retribution. Had the international community intended to promote genocide, it could hardly have devised a better strategy.¹⁰⁴

How do corporations (and nations) get things so wrong? While all are not routinely criminal, the spate of leadership failures in such corporate examples as Enron, Shell and James Hardie (described in further detail below) invites a questioning of the ethos¹⁰⁵ that underpins corporate practice. One aspect of the problem is the culture of silence,¹⁰⁶ accentuated by the absence of a culture of debate.¹⁰⁷ This can stem from a historical preference for a hierarchical, authoritarian approach. Alternatively, as reinforced in the sub-text of *The 9/11 Commission Report* that detailed the bungling of the White House, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation relating to the terrorists attacks on 11 September 2001, there is, to some extent, an intrinsic duality in institutional life and collective self-deception. This duality and deception is seemingly woven into the fabric of every organization.¹⁰⁸ The lesson, in a complex and rapidly changing world, is that looking inwards and suppressing ideas can be counter-productive to the longer-term interests of the organization. In the case of Shell, the problem was not appreciating the impact of global media in the disposal of the platform Brent Spar and the issue of human rights in its dealings with the government of Nigeria. In the case of Enron Corporation, the problem was a gap between espoused values and actual corporate practice. For Rwanda in 1994, the matter was simply a

question of how willing was the international community to act; given the context, apparently not very willing on the evidence. In sum, as Punch says, “some companies set out to break the law, some end up breaking the law, and some cannot manage the messes they get into.”¹⁰⁹ In these cases, causal factors range from personality and rationalization to cultural and structural variables, including wilful blindness and a climate that encourages an abdication of responsibility.¹¹⁰

Another aspect of the problem in corporate ethos is the tendency to only look at financial measures of performance.¹¹¹ This tendency is also described as a focus on “end over means.” A powerful, if somewhat disturbing illustration of this focus is perhaps the conduct of James Hardie Industries (the Australian building manufacturer).¹¹² At issue was the corporation’s charitable trust established in February 2001 to meet future liabilities arising from asbestos-related claims. These funds were reported as clearly inadequate to meet asbestos-related compensation claims, but more damning was the suggestion by the company that further funding compensation would now be the responsibility of the corporation’s trust, since known as the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation (MRCF),¹¹³ and not James Hardie’s. In this reportedly cold-blooded strategy of protecting shareholders interests, James Hardie joined a long list of companies that ignored or tried to distort danger signals, with its director’s behaviour described at a special commission of inquiry as at worst attempting to perpetrate an act of fraud and deception or, at best, being guilty of “protective stupidity.”¹¹⁴

By way of further background, the issue in question relates to a long-running battle between victims of asbestos-related diseases and James Hardie, with shareholders in February 2007 reportedly approving a \$4 billion asbestos compensation

deal. The agreement, which came after six years of negotiations, paved the way for victims of asbestos-related diseases caused by products made by former James Hardie subsidiaries to access compensation over the next 40 years, although as others note it came too late for some victims. Compounding these negative perceptions, it was claimed, though disputed by the company, that James Hardie restructured and moved to the Netherlands to avoid its asbestos-related liabilities. Sometime later, moreover, the company was accused of not helping the Foundation when it asked for more money. As the Chairman, Meredith Hellicar, said at the Annual Information Meeting for Shareholders in September 2004:

When the Directors of the Foundation wrote to us informing us that the fund may experience a significant shortfall, our response was consistent with the approach that the financial position of the Foundation and its subsidiaries had become that of a separate enterprise. At the time, we did not identify an appropriate way by which we could offer further funding. ... In retrospect, we could have responded differently, and more quickly.¹¹⁵

Reviewing the disappointing series of leadership failures, it may be that the economy is rooted in the toxic soil of “unbridled materialism.”¹¹⁶ Perhaps also there might be fundamental questions to be asked of the entrepreneurial spirit and social innovation fostered by modern market capitalism.¹¹⁷ Given the scope and scale of leadership misconduct or failure, however, it is suggested that efforts such as closer scrutiny, enforcement of professional codes, and legislation on corporate governance only address the symptoms and not the root causes of the problem. The issue, on the one hand, concerns the openness of organizations to external scrutiny and their willingness to debate issues internally, as well as to plan for longer-term unanticipated and/or unintended consequences. On the other hand, there is also the arguably wider need to break loose of familiar patterns and to examine the relationship between

corporate ethos and purpose embedded in the culture and social structures of organizations and general society, else we can only invite more of the same behaviour.

A Framework to Support Leadership & Moderate Dark Effects

The practical objectives from this analysis of the dark side in leadership are twofold: first, in a deeper appreciation of the costs and complex challenges in seeking, accepting and fulfilling leadership responsibility; and second, in supporting leadership practice and moderating dark affects from leadership (leadership failure) across all levels of the organization.

In devising a multilevel systems framework (see Figure 1) to support these objectives, the first step is to understand that the ability to lead and the reality of leadership failure may appear immediate and personal, but is more typically related to structural causes or limitations and to less understood aspects of collective behaviour. Thus, rather than ask for more than is reasonable of any one individual, we must first of all understand that there are no easy answers and the reality is that leaders will often need to make choices that see them damned if they do and damned if they don't. Implications for leadership development include a suggestion that rather than more models and theory, efforts should focus on what is described as the timeless essence of leadership, and at the individual level, on the intrinsic moral objectives of leadership. On the positive side of the ledger, by seeing leadership failure as beyond leader disposition or skills, we have at least begun to understand the complexities of the problem so future policies and strategies stand a better chance of success.

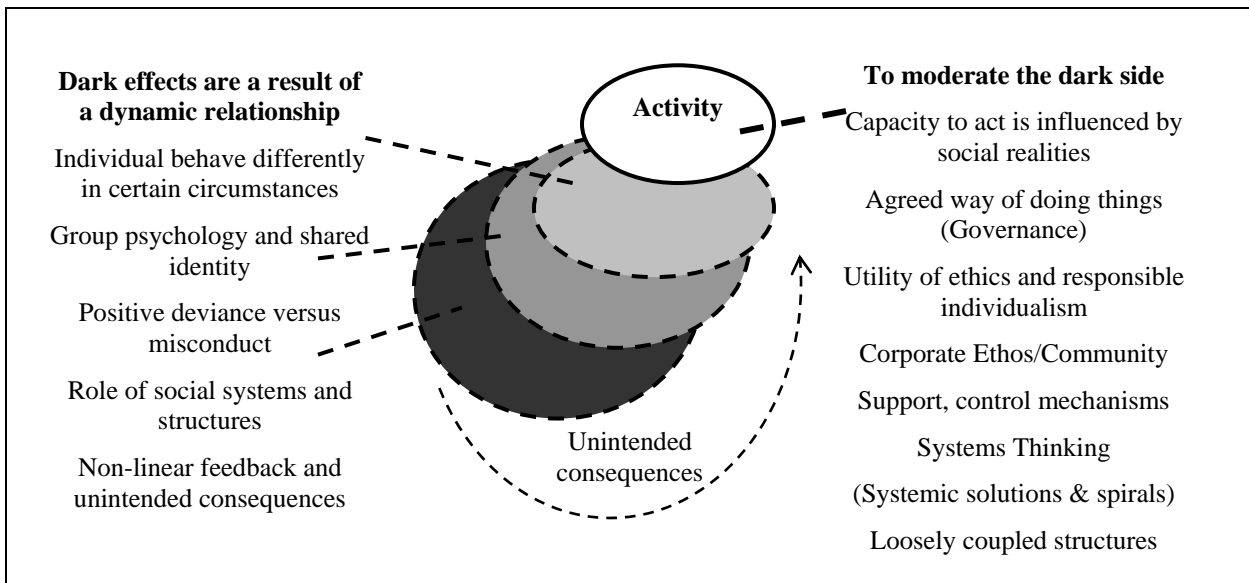


Figure 1: A Multilevel Framework to Understand Leadership and Collective Behaviour

The framework illustrated in Figure 1 identifies key contributing factors (antecedents to) and moderating influences on dark leadership or potential leadership failure, as well as the less understood phenomenon of feedback loops and consequent unintended consequences. Feedback systems, both positive (amplifying) and negative (damping), are an inescapable feature in human systems. While the tendency is to focus on negative feedback that generates regular, predictable patterns of behaviour, positive feedback produces amplifying feedback that can generate vicious (or virtuous) circles ¹¹⁸ that escalate small changes into large reinforcing spirals. ¹¹⁹ The resulting patterns of behaviour (intended or otherwise) are variously described as a chain reaction, the bandwagon effect and a self-fulfilling prophecy. Given the multi-layered inter-connectedness and consequent potential for incremental, yet over time significant, shifts off-course, it is possible to see how each of us can be complicit in actions that history might rightly condemn. ¹²⁰

In terms of supporting an integrated response to shaping change in both individual and collective behaviour, any evaluation of leadership would need to consider

interrelationships and the causal links between situation and behaviour.¹²¹ Thus, when things go wrong, there is little sense in looking for causes of failure in a person or single event. Rather, it is better to seek systemic explanations. This requires distance from the operational domain in order to see the interdependencies and understand the underlying time-varying behaviour in both groups and social systems.¹²² Similarly, in unpredictable situations, rather than seek to direct the detail of what happens, leaders are better off setting qualitative boundaries and looking for patterns and causal connections, with organizational structures characterised by loose (modular) as opposed to tight couplings to provide the necessary flexibility. And yet, social systems are not out there independent of people; rather, they are created through our collective thinking and actions¹²³ (or inaction). Because of this, there is value in encouraging individual political initiative, as well as moral and ethical debate that is supported by responsible individualism. More simply, by praising an individual or by inviting greater debate over complex issues, it is possible through small changes to set up amplifying feedback that can generate virtuous circles and so escalate small change into large reinforcing circles. Enabling (primarily managerial) structures such as formal and informal control systems as a safety net in organizations and reliable data sources, as well as an inclusive community ethos, remain enduring needs to discourage the dark elements of human nature and the collective tendency to cooperate with evil, which can otherwise dominate life.¹²⁴

Closing Remarks

Rather than a storyline of an unusual (evil) individual, a social perspective of the dark side highlights a dynamic interplay of social context at three levels – individual, leader-follower relationships and organizational systems – and consequent complex forms of causality. The picture that emerges from this critique is that there are no easy answers to the leadership challenge. Leadership as a symbiotic relationship between leader and followers highlights group dynamics that reflect either anxiety and frustration or an underlying hidden rationality to collective behaviour, while organizational processes generate their own tensions, as well as unintended consequences. Even so, by understanding how individuals act differently in some circumstances and how behaviour can be attenuated or amplified by group dynamics and feedback loops, we create a “space” to discuss how we may shape circumstances and consequent behaviour.¹²⁵ The value of a functioning formal control system as a safety net is also highlighted, as is the utility of ethics and responsible individualism. Overall, rather than more leadership models and theory, the focus needs to be on the leadership essentials of challenging the process, sharing the vision, enabling others, modelling the way and encouraging the heart.

The words of George Walker Bush, the 43rd President of the United States, in his defence against allegations that his former company, Harken Energy, inflated its reported earnings, illustrate the dilemma facing leaders. Bush noted: “In the corporate world, sometimes things aren’t exactly black and white when it comes to accounting practices.”¹²⁶ When considering the dark side in leadership, this statement is consistent with Arendt’s observation of the evil in Auschwitz as commonplace. At a personal level,

the question we might ask is: “If it were me in that time and place, would I refuse to commit evil?” At the individual level, the ideal of working towards something bigger than oneself and the notion of responsible individualism are highlighted. Unhealthy leader-follower relationships can intensify leader weaknesses, while an incremental build-up of obligations within the informal system can create a duality between appearance and reality. Organizationally, this analysis suggests that aside from some rule breaking being inherent in institutional life, there is a need to challenge a corporate ethos that appears driven by self-interest and short-term interest, with a consequent “marginalization of ethics”¹²⁷ and consequent extreme deviant behaviour as exemplified by Enron Corporation principals and more recently, once again, in the global financial crisis. There is also a need for corporations to be open to changing dynamics, including social directions, and to ensure functioning control systems. How these might be achieved collectively may reside in the group and social identity, where the glue is interconnectedness reflected in the nature of the group and quality of social relationships.

Finally, reflecting on the metaphor of the “dark side of leadership,” it is clear that this evocative imagery does not reflect the complex realities of the situation. This paper has suggested that a focus on the individual is a partial way to examine the issue and importantly a potential misleading way to explain leadership failure. A social perspective however can provide a richer, integrated view of reality that goes beyond eloquence and other desirable leader attributes to the subtle, hidden and unspoken aspects of group psychology and shared social identity. The reality is that organizations and people deviate from the rational model, and leadership can sometimes take on near

pathological forms, particularly when abuse of power remains unchecked and followers become servile or otherwise marginalised. Given this reality, a continued focus on the individual alone can only offer more of the same in terms of poor outcomes. In contrast, the opportunity in seeing the role of context and inter-relationships and the hidden rationality behind apparent deviance is for small actions to shape the environment and for “out of the box” leadership strategies that may leverage effective large-scale change.¹²⁸

Endnotes

- ¹ Context is established by the relationships that we value in our respective communities.
- ² It might as easily be war (or conflict), which remains the great test that separates planning from execution.
- ³ Kets de Vries, "The Dark Side of Leadership: What Drives People to Become Leaders?" *The Antidote* 6 (1997), 11-13.
- ⁴ R. Lussier and C. Achua, *Leadership: Theory, Application, Skills Development* (Ohio: Thomson Learning, 2001).
- ⁵ Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis & the Final Solution* (St. Ives, Great Britain: BBC Books, 2005).
- ⁶ Deborah Hope, "Raiders of the Lost Arts," *Weekend Australian*, 10-11 February 2007, 40.
- ⁷ John E. Mack, "Nuclear Weapons and the Dark Side of Humankind," *Political Psychology* 7, no. 2, (1986), 223-233.
- ⁸ An often unarticulated common sense appreciation of rationality (capable of acting on the environment and choosing to act in order to further one's own best interests) in behaviour.
- ⁹ Jean-Pierre Müller, "Emergence of Collective Behaviour and Problem Solving," in A. Omicini, P. Petta and J. Pitt, eds., *Emergence Societies in the Agents Workshop* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2004), 1-21. See also, Steve Bruce, "Social Change and Collective Behaviour: The Revival in Eighteenth-Century Ross-Shire," *The British Journal of Sociology* 34, no. 4 (1983), 554-572.

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- ¹⁰ de Vries, "The Dark Side of Leadership."
- ¹¹ A. Sinclair, "Body Possibilities," *Leadership* 1, no. 4 (2005), 387-406.
- ¹² Stephen D. Reicher, Michael J. Platow and S. Alexander Haslam, "The New Psychology of Leadership," *Scientific American Mind* (August 2007), 22-29.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ¹⁴ David Hamilton, "Understanding the Complexities of Group Perception: Broadening the Domain," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37, no. 6 (2007), 1077-1101.
- ¹⁵ Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979 that suggests group membership creates in-group/self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favour the in-group at the expense of the out-group.
- ¹⁶ Hamilton, "Understanding the Complexities."
- ¹⁷ Lussier and Achua, *Leadership*, 342.
- ¹⁸ Hamilton, "Understanding the Complexities."
- ¹⁹ Lussier and Achua, *Leadership*, 126, and the related idea of a *fundamental attribution error*.
- ²⁰ In John Bratton, *Work and Organisational Behaviour* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 306.
- ²¹ Research by Irving Janis in 1972 on decision making in the Cuban missile crisis in 1961, Pearl Harbour, and the escalation of the Vietnam War, in P. Murray, D. Poole and G. Jones, *Contemporary Issues in Management and Organisational Behaviour* (Melbourne: Thomson Publishing, 2006), 324-326.
- ²² Philip Ball, *Critical Mass: How One Thing Leads to Another* (United Kingdom: Arrow Books, 2005).

²³ See Naoki Kugihara, "Effects of aggressive behavior and group size on collective escape in an emergency: A test between a social identity model and deindividuation theory," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 40, Part 4 (December 2001), 575-599.

²⁴ Ibid., Study 1 and General Discussion.

²⁵ During the Second World War, the Germans indiscriminately bombed targets in England; the allies retaliated with the saturation bombing of German cities. In Vietnam, Mei Lai (or My Lai), but correctly Son My, a village in the south, was the site of an alleged massacre of some hundreds of civilians in March 1968.

²⁶ Ball, *Critical Mass*, 372-373.

²⁷ Bruce, "Social Change and Collective Behaviour."

²⁸ The opposite to B.F. Skinner's "behaviorism" that argued that behaviour was influenced by positive rewards; focus shifted from behaviourism to cognitive psychology and the influence of thinking on behaviour.

²⁹ M. Castells, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture - Volume 1 - The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2000).

³⁰ P. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of a Learning Organisation* (Sydney: Random House, 1995); J. Sarros and O. Butchatsky, *Leadership* (Sydney: HarperCollins Business, 1996); and P. R. Scholtes, *The Leader's Handbook* (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1998).

³¹ Centre for Creative Leadership, Cynthia D. McCauley, Russ S. Moxley and Ellen Van Velsor, eds., *The Centre for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development* (Greensboro: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 412.

³² See Brian Delahaye, *Human Resource Development: Adult Learning and Knowledge Management*, 2nd Ed. (Milton, Queensland: Wiley and Sons, 2005), 14-15.

³³ Peter Senge and John Sterman, both from MIT's Sloan School of Management, have written lucid explanations of dynamic complexity. See, for example, Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*. Mixing many ingredients in a stew involves detail complexity, as does following a complex set of instructions to assemble a machine. When the same action has dramatically different effects in the short run and the long, there is dynamic complexity. Improving quality, lowering total costs and satisfying customers in a sustainable manner are dynamic problems.

³⁴ Simulations insert thousands of variables and complex arrays of details that can distract us from seeing patterns and major interrelationships. In fact, sadly, for most people, "systems thinking" means "fighting complexity with complexity," devising increasingly "complex" problems. In fact, this is the antithesis of real systems thinking. For more go to http://www.stewardshipmodeling.com/dynamic_complexity.htm.

³⁵ See Australian Defence Doctrine Publication, *Leadership*, ADDP 00.6 (2007). Conversely, one needs to look at the propensity for categorical thinking – people and things are categorized, as in, angry/not angry. Another example is the tendency towards training in analytical thinking, where we ask increasingly narrower questions, an awkward way to get information as it omits the context, the narrative, instead of encouraging true systems thinking and effective critical thinking.

³⁶ A paradox is understood as two mutually exclusive alternatives where both need also to be true.

³⁷ Centre for Creative Leadership, M.L. Pulley and V. Sessa, "Digital Dilemmas: The Paradoxes of Leadership," *Leading Effectively* (May 2003), 187-188.

³⁸ Todd McCarthy, 2007 film review of *Fog of War* (Errol Morris, Director), last accessed 13 February 2008, available online at http://www.errolmorris.com/content/review/fog_mccarthy.html.

³⁹ Lussier and Achua, *Leadership*; based on research by Simon who noted that most people are only partly rational and are in fact emotional/irrational in the remaining part of their actions.

⁴⁰ See Daniel Kahneman, "Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics," *The American Economic Review* 93, no. 5 (December 2003), 1469-1475.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1469.

⁴² See "When Words Decide," *Scientific American* 18, no. 4 (August/September 2007), 39; people are less willing to take a risk for positive outcomes, but may risk if words express the darker side of a picture.

⁴³ Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, published in 1902, told of the evils of imperialism as the author reflected on one of the largest acts of genocide in the Belgian Congo.

⁴⁴ In *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll.

⁴⁵ Most recently, in March 2008, ex-Governor of New York, Eliot Spitzer, a crusader bent on exposing unethical behaviour, but implicated in a call-girl ring; a story not as much about sex as about a betrayal of trust.

⁴⁶ Online editorial, "A Light Dims in Africa," *The Australian*, 16 March 2007, <http://search.news.com.au/search?us=ndmtheaustralian&as=TAUS&q=editorial>.

⁴⁷ The federal government was reportedly told its claim that asylum seekers threw their children overboard was false by the acting head of the defence force (AVM Houston) three days before the federal election in 2001 and a day before Prime Minister John Howard stated there was no uncertainty about the allegation. See report by Mark Forbes, Michael Gordon and Kerry Taylor, *The Age*, 21 February 2002, 1.

⁴⁸ The abuse of prisoners was first revealed on 28 April 2004 by the U.S. television show *60 Minutes*.

⁴⁹ R. Nordland, J. Barry et al., "Rough Justice in Iraq," *Newsweek*, 10 May 2004, 20-22.

⁵⁰ Maurice Punch, *Dirty Business: Exploring Corporate Misconduct* (London: Sage, 1996).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁵² J. Conger, "The Dark Side of Leadership," *Organisational Dynamics* (Autumn 1990), 44-55. Also reprinted in J. Conger, "The Dark Side of Leadership," Chapter 25, in Gill Robinson Hickman, ed., *Leading Organisations: Perspectives for a New Era* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1998), 250-260.

⁵³ G. Elliott, "Brains behind the White House," *The Australian*, 22 February 2007, 12.

⁵⁴ *Nightline* with Ted Koppel, "The U.S.S. Vincennes: Public War, Secret War," last assessed 1 July 1992, available online at

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/jksonc/docs/ir655-nightline-19920701.html>.

⁵⁵ Conger, "The Dark Side of Leadership," 44.

⁵⁶ de Vries, "The Dark Side of Leadership."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁸ H. Marshall, K. Douglas and D. McDonnell, *Deviance and Social Control: Who Rules?* (South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵⁹ Merging factual knowledge, moral judgement and intellectual understanding of circumstances under which some actions were taken.

⁶⁰ Mack, "Nuclear Weapons and the Dark Side of Humankind."

⁶¹ Lacking originality, commonplace, everyday.

⁶² Marshall et al., *Deviance and Social Control*, 23.

⁶³ The U.S. war on terror and perhaps the related struggle by [some] others to create an Islamic caliphate.

⁶⁴ In Rees, *Auschwitz*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, xx.

⁶⁶ Mack, "Nuclear Weapons and the Dark Side of Humankind," 230.

⁶⁷ Mack, "Nuclear Weapons and the Dark Side of Humankind."

⁶⁸ Rees, *Auschwitz*, xix.

⁶⁹ Charles Taylor, in *Forbes* magazine, on the importance of thinking outside the square (*The Australian*, 16 March 2007, 13).

⁷⁰ M. Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (London: Abacus, 2007).

⁷¹ J. Campbell and B. Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

⁷² K. Melymuka, "Harvard Business Review Q&A: The Dark Side of Leadership," *Computerworld* (2002), last accessed 30 June 2010, available online at

http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/71589/The_Dark_Side_Of_Leadership.

From a Canadian perspective, see Lieutenant-General (Ret'd) Michael K. Jeffery, *Inside Canadian Forces Transformation: Institutional Leadership as a Catalyst for Change* (Kingston: CDA Press, 2009).

⁷³ Peter Gronn, *The New Work of Educational Leaders* (London: Sage Publications, 2003).

⁷⁴ Campbell and Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, 124.

⁷⁵ In M. Higgs, "How can we make sense of leadership in the 21st century?" *Leadership and Organisational Development* 24, no. 5 (2003), 273-284.

⁷⁶ Paraphrasing Joseph Conrad, in John Ralston Saul, *On Equilibrium* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 86.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 97; that together provide context and the ability to imagine consequences of an action, by knowing what happened previously.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 91; a reflection of an instrumental approach towards power.

⁷⁹ Examples include older people and the generation gap, going online, and earlier attitudes towards rock music.

⁸⁰ Gronn, *The New Work of Educational Leaders*.

⁸¹ Used as a detention facility by both the U.S.-led coalition forces occupying Iraq and the Iraqi government, and holding more than 7,000 people at its peak in early 2004.

⁸² Such as the famine in the Ukraine in 1932-33; see A. Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

⁸³ S. Hersh, *The Dark Side of Camelot* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1997); the book traces the life and policies of John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States of America.

⁸⁴ de Vries, "The Dark Side of Leadership."

⁸⁵ Lussier and Achua, *Leadership*; Bratton, *Work and Organisational Behaviour*.

⁸⁶ See endnote 21.

⁸⁷ Board of Inquiry Report [BOI], F-111 (Fuel Tank) Deseal/Reseal and Spray Seal Programs (1977-1999), Vol. 1 (2 July 2001), 11-3, available online at

<http://www.airforce.gov.au/projects/f111/Volume1.htm>.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Extreme work overload of senior officers and so little idea of what was occurring on the hangar floor, compounded by limited communication between senior non-commissioned officers and the junior engineering officers, explained partly by the latter having a wide span of responsibility because of downsizing.

⁹⁰ BOI, Vol. 1, 11-2.

⁹¹ Jim Lehrer, Investigating ENRON, PBS On-Line Newshour, 26 February 2002, available online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/business/jan-june02/enron_2-26.html.

⁹² Punch, *Dirty Business*.

⁹³ See Delahaye, *Human Resource Development*.

⁹⁴ In one year Ken Lay reportedly earned US \$252 million, including stock options.

⁹⁵ British Broadcasting Corporation, "Q&A: The Enron case," *Business*,

5 July 2006, last accessed 15 August 2010, available online at

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3398913.stm>.

⁹⁶ Punch, *Dirty Business*.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 215.

⁹⁸ P. Schwartz, "When good companies do bad things," *Strategy & Leadership* 28, no. 3 (2000), 4-11.

⁹⁹ The tribunal that convicted the men was part of a joint effort by the government and Shell to suppress a growing movement among the Ogoni people.

¹⁰⁰ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Indepth: Roméo Dallaire," *Online CBC*, 24 October 2003, last accessed 5 March 2007, available online at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/dallaire/>.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* See also, Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire with Major Brent Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Vintage, 2004).

¹⁰² Benjamin A. Valentino, "Review: Still Standing By: Why America and the International Community Fail to Prevent Genocide and Mass Killing," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (September 2003), 565.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 571.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ That represents an understanding of the way they do things.

¹⁰⁶ See Paulo Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970). Briefly, the term culture of silence is attributed by Friere to people from colonial and ex-colonial countries who are alienated and oppressed. It highlights that social conditions can discriminate by race, sex and age, which is worked into the educational systems that fosters a culture of silence by eliminating paths that lead to a "language of critique."

¹⁰⁷ Schwartz, "When good companies do bad things."

¹⁰⁸ L. Gettler, "Leadership and Followership: How Celebrity Fools Us and Expertise Cons Us, But It's the Group that Needs Grooming," *The Age* (2004), 7.

¹⁰⁹ Punch, *Dirty Business*, 216.

¹¹⁰ See Congressional Research Service Report RS21120, "Auditing and Its Regulators: Proposals for Reform After Enron," in *Enron: A Select Chronology of Congressional, Corporate, and Government Activities*, 9 April 2002.

¹¹¹ Schwartz, "When good companies do bad things."

¹¹² Revealed at a State special commission of inquiry.

¹¹³ http://www.ir.jameshardie.com.au/jh/asbestos_compensation/asbestos_questions.jsp#MRCF.

¹¹⁴ L. Gettler, "Oedipus Wrecks," *The Age* (2004), 2.

¹¹⁵ http://www.ir.jameshardie.com.au/jh/asbestos_compensation/asbestos_questions.jsp#MRCF.

¹¹⁶ J. Wallis, "Amos and WorldCom," *Sojourners Magazine* 31 (2002), 7-8.

¹¹⁷ P. Leung and B.J. Cooper, "The Mad Hatter's Corporate Tea Party," *Managerial Auditing Journal* 18, no. 6/7 (2003), 505-516.

¹¹⁸ R. Stacey, *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics* (Harlow, Essex, England: Pitman Publishing, 1993).

¹¹⁹ Undesirable (such as locust swarms) or desirable (effective insect control) results.

¹²⁰ I am suggesting an interconnection between what we do, what we sometimes do not do and/or what others do/do not do, which in concert and over time can act to embroil us all in bad behaviour. A base example could be the persecution of Jews in Europe. Many more countries than Germany and many more people than Germans were complicit, some by actively doing, others through their inaction; so too for the earlier Armenian genocide that was a precursor for the later wider persecution in Europe of

Jews. A useful current example is the DEEPWATER HORIZON (the Gulf of Mexico oil spill) or the global financial crisis. How is it that we went chasing oil at depths such as this without failsafe safeguards? And how is it that we continue to allow deep water exploration? The answer, quite simply, lies in the fact that collectively we want oil, we also want minimum fuss and so we leave it to others who have their own vested interests ... they get sidetracked and the collective we, over time, incrementally slip in standards (much as we did in the banking sector) ... and all the makings for another disaster are set in place.

¹²¹ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*.

¹²² Anil B. Jambekar, "Systems thinking, personal quality and learning," *Executive Development* 8, no. 4 (1995), 37.

¹²³ C.O. Scharmer, Conversation with Professor Wanda Orlikowski, "Awareness is the First and Critical Thing," (1999), last accessed 8 September 2004, available online at www.dialogonleadership.org/Orlikowski-1999.html.

¹²⁴ Mack, "Nuclear Weapons and the Dark Side of Humankind."

¹²⁵ Marshall et al., *Deviance and Social Control*, 81.

¹²⁶ Reported in *Newsweek*, 22/29 July 2002, 6.

¹²⁷ See Saul, *On Equilibrium*.

¹²⁸ Readers wishing to further pursue the examination of some of the issues raised herein are encouraged to consult Keith T. Thomas and Allan D. Walker, "The Sharp End: Real Life Challenges in a Complex Activity Space," *Journal of Public Affairs* 10 (2010), 186-199, available online at www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/123498043/abstract.



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