

**CO-CONSTRUCTING ETHICAL PRACTICES  
IN THE WORKPLACE**

by

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Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**MASTER OF THEOLOGY**

In the subject

**PRACTICAL THEOLOGY  
with  
SPECIALISATION IN PASTORAL THERAPY**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

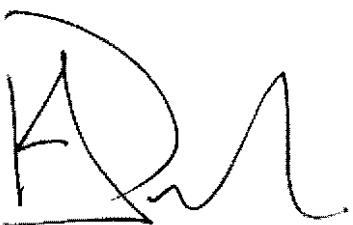
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November 2002



I declare that 'Co-constructing ethical practices in the workplace' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



(H J Prinsloo)

November 22, 2002

**When I recite stories of the journey, people genuinely listen with disbelief that such a business existed, and want to know more and more. This makes me proud to have been part of a team of 'a pioneer approach to business'.**

**Freddy (October 11, 2002)**

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## **Dedication**

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**I am dedicating this dissertation to our factory family, deceased and living.**

Thank you for showing how Simunye lives on in our hearts – may it always serve you. I hope and pray that your goodwill and courage will be remembered for a long time like our Amadoda products. May our story help people transform the workplaces of our children's children in the new South Africa! My farewell blanket has kept me warm during the lonely and long cold nights of writing this dissertation. Thank you.

**Lashona ilanga (the sun is setting - we must get on with our work)!**

Thank you to the unwavering supervisors, Unisa library staff, caring friends, loving family, wise spirit guides and Umvelinqangi, in Zulu the one who came first, God - for your support during the journey of my studies.

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## **Summary**

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This dissertation of limited scope explored via a qualitative reflective approach how pastoral therapy and care practices contributed to workplace transformation and ethics at a factory that had to be restored to profitability.

In Chapter 1, the study's research curiosity questions how pastoral therapy and care practices could inform business in its resistance of workplace trauma and injustice. The epistemology of contextual theology and social constructionism is reviewed in Chapter 2 in its support of the research. Themes and ideas such as; participatory ethical care, ethics, the prophetic role, narratives, workplace culture, witnessing and participant awareness and empowerment are applied to workplace culture transformation.

Chapter 3 explores the factory's dominant story of low morale, financial loss and feelings of no hope for the future in context of discourses of capitalism. In resistance to the dominant story, Chapter 4 focuses on practices and experiences that supported the factory's alternative story and Chapter 5 reviews the factory's alternative story in context of purposeful transformation practice.

Chapter 6 concludes the study by reflecting on the research curiosity, the research aims and the researcher's development.

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## **Key terms**

Aware empowered participants, Contextual theology, Ethics, Justice, Pastoral care, Pastoral therapy practice, Participatory ethical care, Prophetic ethical leadership, Social construction, Witnessing, Workplace injustice, Workplace trauma, Workplace culture, Workplace transformation.

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# **Chapter 1. Background to the study**

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This chapter serves as an introduction to how pastoral therapy and care practices could contribute towards transformation of workplace culture. The research curiosity and aims are stated in Section 1.2 and the research approach is described thereafter.

## **1.1. Are we caring for workplace members and workplace culture?**

Workplace trauma and stress have highlighted the area of concern – many current-day workplace cultures are not ethical and nurturing. Workplace cultures need to transform to become more nurturing and ethical. The following section explores the pastoral therapist's position in relation to workplace transformation as background to the research curiosity.

### **1.1.1 Workplace trauma and stress**

Indications are that workplaces are sources of stress to many people, at high personal and organisational costs. In an article in the *Star* under the heading, *Workplace a nightmare for many: Stress and depression taking a frightful toll on worker's health*, Peters (2000:10) argues:

Bullying, work overload and staff cuts are among factors that have made stress one of the greatest health hazards in the workplace ... bullying by ambitious workers and power-mad bosses... According to the South African Federation of Mental Health, the majority of adults spend between 50 and 80% of their waking hours at work, and 68% of all workers will experience workplace problems severe enough to prevent them from coping with their day-to-day duties. About 200-million working days are lost each year worldwide because of employees with depression. Each employee experiencing job-performance problems costs a company conservatively 25% of his or her salary and fringe benefits in absenteeism, tardiness, reduced efficiency accidents, medical claims and judgment errors. Susan Marais-Steinman, chairperson of the Foundation for the Study of Work Trauma, says stress and work trauma are caused by workplace violence, both physical and emotional.

The Foundation for the Study of Work Trauma in South Africa (Marais-Steinman 2002a) reports:

Workplace violence, physical and emotional, is the single biggest threat to the workplace of the new millennium according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). A whopping 78% of employees in South Africa confirmed that they had been bullied or victimised at least once in their careers. Fierce competition, lean and mean corporations, the major and profound restructuring of the workplace, increasing greed of business to drive the profit margins higher resulted in the displacement and unemployment of millions of workers. Even the rise of small business cannot stop the increase in negative survival behaviour like workplace hostilities/bullying/mobbing crossing international borders - this phenomenon has been reported in every country. Everybody is vulnerable and could find them cleaned in the corridors if they are not alert.

In the current productivity and profitability driven economies, high demands are placed on workers by workplaces. Firms need to satisfy their shareholders – in typical capitalist language; firms need to make money first and foremost (Manning 2001:29). Growth is pursued at all costs as growth is seen as the ultimate measure of corporate success or failure (:28). Just for business to survive is tough; it is known that more firms fail than succeed (:9). In the name of reduced overheads, less people are expected to do more. Workers face job cuts as 'the name of the game everywhere, whilst being stressed out trying to balance family and work commitments' (Sunter 1999:11-14).

The South African social situation is also impacting on the workplace. Marais-Steinman (2002b:82) argues that

Levels of violence are very high in South Africa already – the workplace was always regarded as being free from the violence from the streets, but not anymore. The violence in society has spilled over in the workplace and to an extent in the homes (increase in domestic violence) of South

Africa and the best way to address violence in this country is to address it, starting with the workplace.

What is going on, when workplace homicide is reported as the fastest-growing kind of murder in the USA (Popcorn & Marigold 1996:51)? Why do preliminary studies indicate that work trauma is worse in South Africa than in many northern hemisphere companies (Peters 2000:10)?

### ***1.1.2 Our socio-political-economic past***

South Africa's socio-political-economic past needs to be kept in mind to fully appreciate the complexity and dynamics of the current South African workplace culture and accompanying challenges towards transformation.

When European colonialism entered South Africa, it forced its will onto the indigenous people. Needless to say, without consulting the supposed beneficiaries of the vaunted three Cs – Civilization, Christianity and Commerce. Apartheid's 336-year history attests to the subjugation. In this context Maimela (1998:111,112) refers to this type of racial domination stemming from the conscious or unconscious belief in the inherent superiority of all people of European ancestry.

Since the 1994 election and the new political dispensation, many things have been changing in South Africa. Notably, South African workplaces are becoming more culturally diverse (Callinicos, 1996:107), yet they are steeped in the capitalist traditions of colonial, and modernist, times. On preparing to visit South Africa, Weingarten (2000:389) commented:

[N]ever have I tried to comprehend a social, economic, and political reality of such immensity, extreme contradictions, and paradox.

### **1.1.3 Continue counselling or promote co-transformation?**

Are managers and pastoral therapists aware of how much trauma and stress are caused in, and by, workplaces? Do pastoral therapists and managers reflect on their ethical positions in relation to their colleagues' and clients' workplaces?

During twenty years in the corporate business world I have often witnessed work trauma and stress and have personally been subjugated by workplace trauma, injustices and stress. As a pastoral therapist I support many clients who have been subjugated by workplace trauma, injustices and stress.

In this study, I consider *pastoral therapist* a practitioner offering care based on the integration of psychology and religion (Peck 1993:2). *Pastoral therapy* is the more specialised form of care practice, from unstructured general informal care by lay persons to pastoral counselling as a more structured care dialogue by experienced or trained persons (Browning 1993:5-7).

Do pastoral therapists remain reactive to the area of concern; thereby just continuing their counselling support of people with workplace trauma? To my mind, this reactive position accepts that workplace cultures will continue to abuse people and that pastoral therapists could do little to change that as a dominant story. With dominant story I mean a reality creating social construction that suppresses alternatives of hope and progress (White & Epston 1990:18,41).

Alternatively, could pastoral therapists engage with workplace trauma and injustice at source – supporting workplace co-transformation as alternative stories with clients? Such alternative stories co-discover and connect events, themes and issues differently in order to constitute alternative realities (White & Epston 1990:16,28). To my mind, pastoral therapists could favourably consider choosing to engage with workplace transformation. This choice is partly motivated by prophetic commitment to transformation inherent in pastoral therapy, discussed in Paragraph 1.1.5. Another argument to support workplace transformation is based in the circular relationship between social reform and workplace (institutional)

reform (Clinebell & Seifert 1969:9). Marais-Steinman (2002b:82) believes that the workplace is an important institution to affect social change.

Other than the discussion in this study, pastoral therapy practice in workplace transformation is noted in Johann Roux's work (Roux & Steyn 2002:159).

#### **1.1.4 Transformation as a means to improve workplace culture**

I have seldom witnessed happy and fulfilled people in workplaces, be it shop floors, offices or in boardrooms. Neither have I witnessed more than a few truly nurturing and ethical workplaces. Work and workplaces are central to people's lives; as means of earning money and where people invest large amounts of time and energy. Ethical workplaces could therefore contribute significantly to people's well being as awareness is practised in the quality and effect of actions on people (Rossouw 2002:3).

I believe many workplaces could transform to become more ethical and more nurturing environments. Barrett (1998:xiii) dedicated his book *Liberating the corporate soul* to people that 'know there is a better way to do business', believing 'that it is possible to change the philosophy of business and be financially successful'. Workplace transformation is also in the interest of, what Barrett (:xiv) calls: 'three of the most exciting new frontiers of business – employee fulfilment, social responsibility and compassionate capitalism.'

In a *Financial Times* article, Overell (2001:11) summarises a growing need for workplace transformation:

Human beings want to love their organizations – they don't want to work for a set of bastards. Work and organizations are such inhuman places with such impossible agendas that life tends to get squeezed out of people.

Participants in workplace transformation are also witnesses, and in co-transformation, they need to be aware and empowered. Transformation

participants can be supported to move into positions of more awareness and more empowerment, as illustrated in Weingarten's (2000:397) typology of witness positions, discussed in Chapter 2.

Workplace cultures don't transform by themselves; such transformation requires the aware empowered participation of all workplace members, and especially of management. Managers as workplace leaders can co-lead transformation with pastoral therapists as participating facilitators (Kotzé, Myburg, Roux and Associates 2002:159).

#### ***1.1.5 Prophetic pastoral leadership and ethical care in transformation***

There are similarities between the roles of pastoral therapists and managers in workplaces, particularly when in support of transformation. Both are roles of leadership, power and influence. Their support of good (ethical) and care practices are of utmost importance, so also their knowledge and awareness of ethical transformation. Given the complexity of transformation and the risks and fear associated, workplace members, as the transformation participants, need to trust the transformation leaders:

A leader is someone people choose to follow to a place they would not normally go by themselves (Barker 1998).

From a pastoral care perspective, we are challenged to do pastoral care as participatory ethical care (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7). In this manner we honour the empowerment of participants by doing care *with* people, and not *for* people discussed in closer detail in Chapter 2. From a prophetic-ethical perspective I believe to do 'pastoral care which is reconstructive as well as critical and prophetic' (Graham 1996:137). Prophetic ethical care moves me toward a commitment to transformation, positioning myself 'on the side of those suffering and against all oppressive and exploitative discourses and practices' (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:3).

By means of a transformation practice, co-creation of change within participants and myself takes place, relating to Bain's (1986:323) 'mystic-prophet coincidence'. Bain sees the union of personal journey with institutional reform. A prophetic ethical approach promotes ethical co-transformation in organisations as *praxis*, or 'value-directed transformation' (Graham 1996:137). The prophetic approach works from within the situation, yet with an outside perspective (Gerkin 1991:77).

### ***1.1.6 Interaction of pastoral and business practices***

Over time, churches and religious denominations have been drawing increasingly on practices, language and tools from business. Various authors have traced these influences – computerisation and financial management (Alheit 1992:47,50), teamwork and leadership strategy (Smit 1992:53-59) and strategic planning (Smuts 1992:108; Nel 1994:182-203). Pattison (1993:212,213) argued that managerial techniques were beginning to directly shape the way in which professional ministry and pastoral care was being carried out.

Business and the church are woven into the socio-economic fabric of life. They share various organisational characteristics, from their communities of membership, through aspects of finance, power relations, to rules, aspects of risks and quests for certainty. The church and business often share the same members. To what extent has the church and pastoral practices inspired business? For example, is business ethics a spiritual concept? What could managers learn from pastoral practices, say in the practice of care, transformation of the status quo and resistance to injustice?

What would it take for business to be informed and supported by pastoral practices? Accepting that business managers do not have to become pastors in order to draw on pastoral practices, this study could communicate practical experience on which managers could draw.

Approximately a year ago, I commenced a six-month assignment as the consulting Managing Director (MD) of a medium-sized factory with 165 employees and a turnover of R80 million. The brief of the assignment was to urgently return the

factory to profitability after a long spell of financial loss. Although I was not appointed as pastoral therapist, my prophetic-ethical inspiration moved me to approach the assignment in a participatory ethical caring and transforming way.

In research before commencing the consulting engagement and during the consulting engagement, stories of a history of unfair labour practices, workplace injustice, stress, mismanagement practices and power abuse surfaced. The factory culture had a dominant story of little to no care, trust or hope for a future, discussed in Chapter 3.

The factory stories also included the voices of courageous, loyal, experienced, creative and persevering people. Inspired by these voices and my post-modern narrative belief in alternative stories, the consulting assignment was accepted with a commitment to practice participatory ethical care. In Chapters 4 and 5 the factory's alternative story is discussed as the result of the co-transformation efforts with the factory's transformation participants.

The research for the study is based on the factory's dominant and alternative stories.

## **1.2. The research curiosity and aim**

The research curiosity focused on how pastoral therapy and care practices could contribute towards transformation of workplace culture. *Workplace culture* is used to include ethics, spirituality and the dominant stories of workplace members, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **Aims of the study**

In the first place, the study aims to reflect on the experiences and stories of my former factory colleagues by revisiting and remembering our practices and our results as alternative stories during the six months consulting engagement.

Secondly, the study will reflect on how pastoral care practices can support managers to improve ethics in business and invite co-transformation of workplace cultures.

Thirdly, the study will reflectively offer experiences of ethical transformation of workplace culture.

### **1.3. Need for, and significance of, this study**

Prior to commencing the study, a Unisa literature research was conducted of local and international university databases. This research did not produce any similar approach or study applicable to this project in practical theology.

Economic activity is interwoven with the society within which it functions (Rossouw 2002:2,3) – we refer to the ‘socio-economic history’ of our country (Lessem & Nussbaum 1996:13). Creating better and more ethical workplaces implies that transformation is needed. For example: workplace members need to transform to become more aware of ethics and to become more empowered to promote ethical practices. Due to the circular relationship between individual and social problems, changes on individual levels are supported as institutions change, which in turn will help individuals change (Clinebell & Seifert 1969:9).

As workplaces change, so society is influenced. Christie (in Lessem & Nussbaum 1996:138) considers ‘...a company, however small ... as a powerful vehicle for social change’. Society could become more ethical and a better place to live in. In turn, society and workplaces could support changes in individuals. David Moshapalo, executive director of the Foundation for African Business and Consumer Services (Fabcos), is quoted by Havenga (1999:5) on the interaction between business and society: '[W]e shall go a long way towards being ethical if we can eliminate greed from our society'.

Never before has large-scale greed and shady ethics been demonstrated so clearly as in the recent spate of large American corporations failing and thereby severely affecting the world economy. Some of these corporations are going under with the

losses of thousands of jobs, or having to cut thousands of jobs not to go under. The job losses are not considering the preceding workplace trauma and stress that had, in all probability, been permeating down from unethical executive levels. Unethical behaviour is part of the crisis in boardrooms that Garratt (1997) refers to in his book *The fish rots from the head*, based on an ancient Chinese saying. The title alludes to the nature of an organisation stemming from its leadership.

The front cover of *Newsweek* magazine (August 5, 2002) shouted in old style American wild West poster format:

**Wanted. Shady CEOs.** [Photographs of 3 recently disgraced CEOs] **Dead or alive.** As the '90s boom unravels, more and more CEOs might end up on the wrong side of the law.... Sinking world stock markets.

I believe that this research is needed to support urgent workplace transformation that would support ethical societal transformation and which in turn, would support ethical workplace transformation. This study can be significant in that it can offer storied experiences, in dialogue with literature, of transforming a workplace culture. In this manner, the report can inform and support all participants of workplace transformation, be they managers, employees, business consultants or pastoral therapists.

#### **1.4. Epistemological context of this research**

Various approaches (or ideas) support the epistemology of my post-modern narrative and prophetic-ethical pastoral therapy *praxis*. This section briefly attends to the two particular approaches as epistemology of the research, being contextual theology and social construction. These approaches support the practices of workplace culture transformation upon which the study's research has been based. In this section, an overview is offered of these approaches; a more detailed discussion follows in Chapter 2.

#### **1.4.1 *Contextual theology***

My study of pastoral therapy takes place within the context of practical theology, and I have chosen contextual theology as the theological approach to work in. This paragraph serves as an introduction to the in depth discussion in Chapter 2.

Bosch (1991:424,425) argues that contextual theology emphasises *doing* theology and not just *being* an observer; it sides with the poor or the culturally marginalised (:423). Contextual theology emphasises the priority of *praxis*, claims an epistemological break with traditional theologies (:423), and is known for its knowledge of the situation and commitment to change (Ackermann 1996: 35; Bosch 1991:423-425).

Bosch (1991:423,439) believes changing situations with contextual theology happens from below (the marginalised people). Changing situations in this manner is considered action for 'justice, liberation and healing' (Ackerman 1996:34). Within contextual theology's commitment to change situations and practices for the betterment of marginalised people, ethics could play an important guiding role. Ethics are the measure of the quality of actions and the reflection on who benefits (Rossouw 2002:3). To my mind, knowledge of a situation relates to awareness and reflection, which is inherent in ethics.

From themes within contextual theology, ideas and roles have been identified to affect change of situations and institutions. These ideas and roles are discussed in Chapter 2, and include participatory ethical care, the prophetic role as inspiration to transformation, inclusive spirituality and ethics.

#### **1.4.2 *Social constructionism***

Social constructionism radically doubts a taken-for-granted view of the world and invites one to challenge the objective basis of conventional knowledge (Gergen 1985:267). In pastoral practice, social construction provides a meaningful epistemology to use conversation as a means to help people (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:27).

To my mind Bosch (1991:424) acknowledges social constructionist influences as epistemology of contextual theology; understanding the world not as a fixed, static object. Bosch (:424) argues that the world and its people are in a continuous evolving project, where the knowledge generated by action is worked out by contextual theology by means of a hermeneutical circle of experience and reflection (:425). In this socially constructed evolution, political theology and the theology of development are seen as the evolutionary components of a ‘socio-economic pattern of contextualisation’ (:421).

The discussion on social construction in Chapter 2, applies the epistemology of the study closer to the workplace and transformation. In this closer application, workplace community and workplace culture, witnesses of joy and trauma, the need for participant awareness and empowerment and workplace culture co-transformation is discussed.

The discussion on social constructionism is continued in depth in Chapter 2.

## **1.5. Feasibility of the study**

Initially the consulting assignment at the factory was not approached as a research project for my study. Yet, the experience my former colleagues and I had during my tenure (and for some of them even after my departure) formed the basis of my qualitative reflective research. The research was based on their stories and reflections with literature as discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Since the consulting engagement had been completed and the factory in which I consulted had subsequently been closed, I know of no impediments to use the above experience as part of this study. For the reflection and discussion of personal experiences, many former colleagues were available and interested to take part in the research project – they are the research participants. Names and references relating to my consulting experience have been changed to protect identities of people and that of the factory.

## **1.6. Doing qualitative and reflective research**

The research was inspired by McTaggart's (1997:27) conviction of participatory action research. Intensive study of experiences gained during the consulting engagement formed the core of the research, and as a result, produced knowledge that is hoped to be usable. Foucault points out that knowledge is a source of power (Kincheloe 1991:1,15). I sincerely hope that this report will create knowledge about the research curiosity that will become a source of inspiration and power. This source of power (of the alternative story) is to support transformation towards more ethical and nurturing workplaces.

A qualitative and reflective approach was adopted as the study happened after the consulting event and relied on personal narratives of the transformation participants.

### ***1.6.1 Using a qualitative approach***

Guided by a qualitative approach, this research project searched for the interplay between ethics and practice, thereby searching for the meanings generated by the participants of the study (Gergen 1985:267-268). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:167) regard this approach as primarily exploratory and descriptive and the main source of data would be people's words and actions. Meanings have been incorporated into the study for their action initiating qualities supporting transformation.

From a modernist research perspective, objective truth and quantifiable facts are considered by some to be superior. From a post-modern, qualitative perspective, the research in this project has been "collected" by means of storytelling local knowledge and experiences. These are stories of personally lived (subjective) realities – as preferred narratives of the participants.

### ***1.6.2 Using a reflective approach***

From the research, draft narratives were produced of Chapters 3, 4 and 5. These drafts were circulated to the research participants for reflection. Reflections, changes, inclusions and deletions by the research participants were incorporated

in subsequent drafts. These were again circulated to the participants in order to establish the chapters as 'recognizable realities' (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:169), which would be the participants' preferred narratives.

Morgan (2000:122) argues that narrative therapy often engages outsider witness groups that attend therapy sessions and reflect on the therapy process with the client. Reflection happens by way of internal dialogue within reflecting members, as well as externally by way of their remarks. The study's research participants have been engaged as clients offering their stories and also as outsider witnesses of the factory's workplace culture. Through the research and co-authoring process of Chapter 3 (dominant stories) and Chapters 4 and 5 (alternative stories), the participants could also reflect on their internal dialogues.

This reflective process is to achieve critical research as *praxis* – being informed practice where theory and practice are inseparable (Kincheloe 1991:20). In this manner, I am reminded that 'the human being as part of history is a reflexive subject, i.e., an entity who is conscious of the constant interaction between humans and their world' (:26).

## **1.7 Ethical considerations**

Who will benefit from the study? I am hoping, first and foremost, that the research will benefit my former factory colleagues. Many of these colleagues have indicated their interest in the study and are able to take our story into other workplaces where others would be able to benefit through them. Confidentiality has been maintained in all respects, and references to participants will be by their chosen pseudonyms, as recorded on their consent forms.

Secondly, I hope the study can support everyone committed to workplace transformation, be they pastoral therapists, managers or employees developing awareness and empowerment.

Other than completing the requirements for my degree, I have benefited personally from the study, as discussed in my reflection in Chapter 6. Reflecting on my position of research, I kept in mind that in doing ethics, I have also been affected and changed. In this manner I resonated with feminist research – I have learnt about myself, the subject matter under study and how to conduct research (Reinharz 1992:194).

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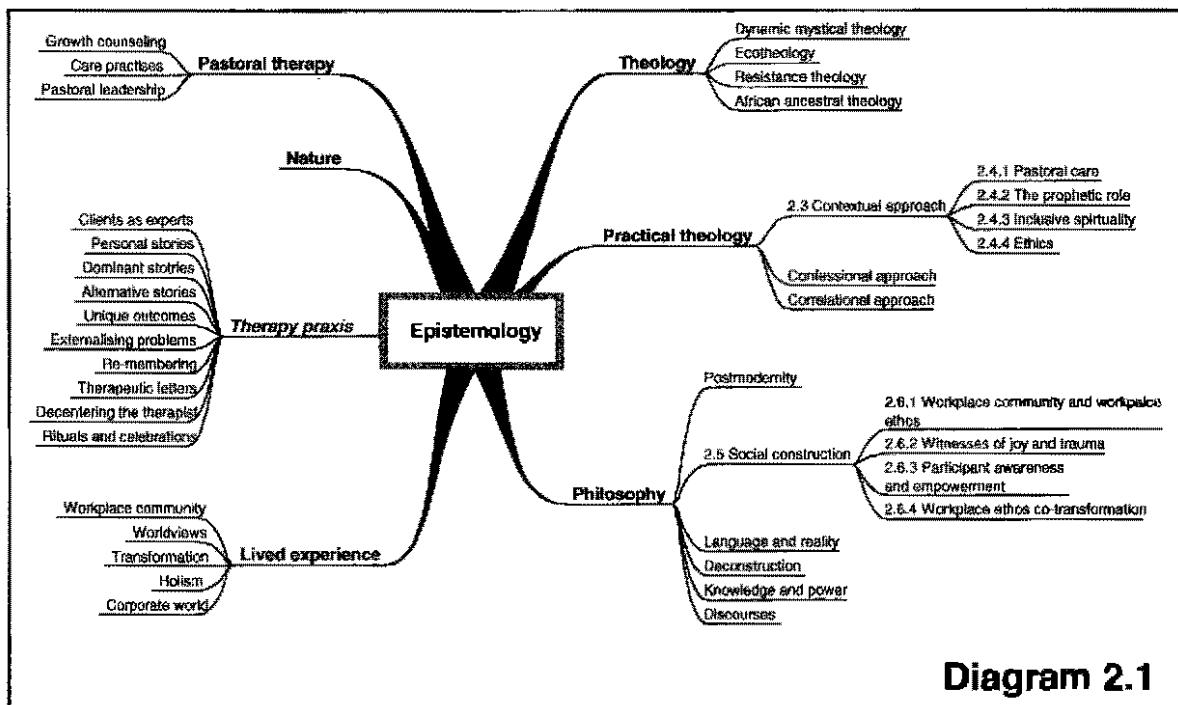
## **Chapter 2. Epistemological context of the study**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter continues the discussion of epistemological context, started in Chapter 1. A ‘situated’ or ‘positional’ epistemology according to Haraway quoted in Graham (1996:9,157) is used to generate ‘reliable political and ethical sensibilities’. These sensibilities help my pastoral care practices to improve in understanding and commitment, from where I then apply the epistemology again in practice.

### **2.2 Ideas (or approaches) of personal epistemological context**

A number of ideas (or approaches) are supporting the epistemology of my postmodern narrative pastoral prophetic-ethical *praxis*. These supporting ideas are but a subset from the vast field of theology, pastoral therapy and experience. To visualize their interrelatedness, these ideas have been mapped into Diagram 2.1. Many of these approaches and ideas have already been discussed in depth in literature and have been incorporated into the academic discourse of pastoral therapy.



**Diagram 2.1**

As indicated in Chapter 1, two particular approaches have been chosen as the basis of the epistemology in this study: contextual theology (Section 2.3) and social construction discourse (Section 2.4). Diagram 2.1 has been drawn in mind map format to support fast reference and to avoid listing ideas and approaches hierarchically as of more or less importance. Other than the discussed epistemology, the study also draws on other ideas of my epistemology, which can be referenced via the above diagram.

## 2.3 Contextual theology

Contextual theology is known for its in-depth knowledge of the situation and the intention of the practice to affect change (liberation) in a situation or society (Ackermann 1996: 35; Bosch 1991:423-425). To my mind, the in-depth knowledge of the situation relates to a person's ethics (Paragraph 2.4.4) and awareness (Paragraph 2.6.2).

In order to affect change (and liberation) of a situation (or society), I am inspired by the revolutionary socio-economic model of contextual theology. Bosch (1991:421) considers the revolutionary socio-economic model as 'contextual theology proper'. In its revolutionary sense, contextual theology cares for, and sides with, marginalised people – 'Vox victimarum vox Dei (the cries of the victims are the voices of God)' (:424). Contextual theology therefore also offers a revolutionary approach for people marginalised by workplace dysfunction. The liberatory commitment of contextual theology offers an approach to resistance of workplace injustice and transformation of workplace culture.

Contextual theology emphasises *doing* theology and not to just *being* an observer (Bosch 1991:424,425). *Doing* theology implies action practice. When injustice is resisted, it is about 'doing justice' (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:70). Doing justice leads to the ethical and political themes of the 'prophetic trajectory of the Old Testament' (:70). Justice as portrayed by the prophets and Jesus, inspires current-day justice to be compassionate, forgiving, energising, biased in favour of the oppressed and liberatory.

### **2.3.1 Themes within contextual theology inspire roles and ideas**

Within contextual theology various themes have been noted, for example: marginalised, political, justice, change, God, resistance, prophetic, ethical and care. Particular roles and ideas relative to the research curiosity (Chapter 1) have been identified from the aforementioned themes, such as: pastoral care, the prophetic role, inclusive spirituality and ethics. These ideas are discussed in more detail in the following sections since they support my pastoral therapy practice in workplace culture transformation.

### **2.3.2 Pastoral care inspires participatory ethical care**

Pastoral care is often associated with care within, and by, the Christian church (Pattison 1993:15). However, Pattison (:196) suggests pastoral care could be practiced by people who are not members of Christian faith communities. Lay religious persons could for example be business managers or colleagues. ‘Pastoral care is not just for the church, but for the world,’ as Jesus, for example, served the needy of the world (:16).

As women are generally perceived as caregivers and do so much care, an ethical reflection on giving and receiving pastoral care must include a feminist critique of care (Pattison 1993:91,194; Graham 1996:10). The feminist influence on care inspires a bias towards the unheard and unseen people and issues in need of care (Pattison 1993:195).

Pastoral care could be applied in the workplace, since it does not separate public and private well-being (Pattison 1993:89). Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:7) argue that a commitment to pastoral care as participatory ethical care challenges care-givers ‘not to care for, but to care *with* people who are in need’. To my mind, *participatory care* implies the empowerment of care-receivers, as well as people who participate by witnessing care events.

*Ethical care* implies an awareness of asking who benefits from which actions (discussed in Paragraph 2.3.5). Ethics asks how care is offered and supports an awareness of asking which unheard or unseen people or issues are in need of care. Workplace culture could for example be an *unseen* issue in need of care. The dimensions of awareness mentioned above, empowerment and ethics are explored in closer detail in the following sections as the application of my chosen epistemology in social construction of transformation.

Participatory ethical care became a main theme of support in the alternative stories of the people at the factory, discussed in Chapter 4. These alternative stories also reflect the interrelationships between care and trust and how they supported the transformation of workplace culture.

### ***2.3.3 The prophetic role as inspiration to transformation***

I see the prophetic role as an inspiration to action for participatory ethical care, as discussed above. Ethical care is committed to transformation – a commitment motivated by solidarity not just with marginalised people, but also against the structures, that create and enforce the marginalisation (Snowden 1989:7,8). To my mind the prophetic role is integral and supportive of pastoral therapy engaged with workplace culture transformation. The prophetic perspective could also inform and support managers that are not necessarily pastoral therapists. Various underlying aspects of the prophetic role have been identified during research and are invited into the discussions of transformation in Chapters 4 and 5:

**Being visionary:** Buss (1981:9) argues that being visionary is ‘to communicate insight beyond what is already known’. Being visionary is to offer a ‘new view’ ‘to crack the logic of the everyday world’ as Jesus tried to do with the parable of the returned son (Williams & Houck 1992:3). Bain (1986:323) explores that with visionary a creative, not merely conforming, impulse is brought into the body of the ecclesial and civic.

**Praxis for justice:** Graham (1996:137) considers *praxis* as ‘value-directed transformation’ that, to my mind invites ethics and justice into the support of liberation theological action. Justice and fairness are promoted to embody

the power of love in all interpersonal relationships and in all social problems (Clinebell & Seifert 1969:11).

**Being a culture broker:** Prophetic action can work between two communities, interpret them to one another and draw them together into ever-greater levels of understanding and acceptance (Snowden 1989:12; Gerkin 1991:79). Bain (1986:323) argues that the pastoral counsellor as prophet aims for unities between individual soul care and larger institutional systems.

**Doing and inviting spirituality:** Bosch (1991:424,425) argues that the theologian cannot just be an observer, and 'can only theologise credibility if it is done *with* those who suffer'. Spiritual presence can be invited into the workplace as part of interdependence between people, focuses on connection, extends relationships towards the infinite and cares for the whole person (Primeaux & Mullen 1999:119-123).

**Being under spiritual guidance:** The prophetic relies on 'an active God' in imaginative prophetic ministry, which is in the process of bringing about new and transforming reality; a God also for the present and the future (Gerkin 1991:71). The prophetic follows 'spirit-filled *praxis*' (Graham 1996:190) and is an activity of spiritual reality (Buss 1981:9).

**Being courageous:** Gerkin (1991:76) believes that courage is required to bear the responsibility of prophetic leadership, as such leadership 'involves a quality of suffering fraught with ambivalence, uncertainty, and the wish for support'. It requires courage to face resistance whilst practicing change through the use of structures and power (Clinebell & Seifert 1969:14).

**Solidarity inside with people, with outside awareness:** To my mind, the present day prophetic role is similar to that of the prophets of the Old Testament, 'seeing commonly accepted practices of their people through the lenses of an alternative consciousness' (Gerkin 1991:77). Faber (1981:196) argued that the prophets had deep feelings of solidarity with the people whom they addressed and prophetic challenge without solidarity is impossible (:198). Yet, the prophetic role requires awareness of social structures (and discourses), and to address the innate belief that the structures of society (or the workplace) are 'the way things are meant to be' (Snowden 1989:7).

### **2.3.4 Inclusive spirituality for diverse workplace communities**

*Spirituality* is preferred in this dissertation rather than theology, faith or religion, and is used in order to be inclusive of diverse cultures, convictions and narratives (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:1). With *spirituality* I also mean to honour and respect the sacredness of individual spiritual preference and practice. This section presents *inclusive spirituality*, as part of a workplace community, which could be invited to become visible in, and be part of, workplace transformation.

I agree with Nash, McLennan and Lucks (2001:3) that it is both important and difficult to combine faith and work. People and workplaces are wary of domination by any particular religious conviction, as there could be risks of marginalisation, discrimination and injustice. Grenz (1999 :43-45) believes there is a quest among many people for a communal spirituality. The quest for communal spirituality comes at the time when Grenz notes a decline in participation in traditional organised religion (:42). Yet, although not being necessarily part of organised religion, many people consider themselves spiritual.

How would communal spirituality be constituted and invited into the workplace? Often similar spiritual ethics are to be found at the hearts of different approaches to religions and spiritual convictions, often just with different language and narratives. In context of the search for spirituality, Grenz (1999:43) for example argues that one could think 'through what lies at the heart of Christian spirituality'. *Heart spiritual similarities* could for example be: soul, love, miracles, God, respect, values, compassion, grace, sacredness, infinity, mystical wonder and our inter-relatedness with nature. Inclusive spirituality can be co-created by caring, willing, aware and respectful workplace members, who offer personal spiritual perspectives into the *communal spiritual middle ground* as ethics for the common good. It is the common good that would ultimately contribute to global survival (Barrett 1998:25,26).

Not-previously-heard voices, such as from feminist spiritual perspectives could be invited into the communal spiritual middle ground. Kathleen Fischer (quoted in

Graham 1996:182) maintains there is a belief in ‘inclusion rather than exclusion, connectedness rather than separateness and mutuality in relationships rather than dominance and submission’.

Barrett (1998:13) believes that spiritual motivation provides one of the ‘ultimate answers’ to an increase in productivity and creativity, which could benefit the workplace. The workplace in turn, can be a place to find meaning in the search for, and living of, spirituality (:151). There is increasing evidence that companies are taking spirituality seriously. For example, in 1995 the World Bank undertook a project aligning corporate values with spiritual values (Overell 2001:11). A conference was hosted on ethical and spiritual values for employees from all over the globe to promote environmentally sustainable development.

### ***2.3.5 Ethics reflects on who benefits from which actions***

Ethics became visible from the discussion on participatory ethical care (paragraph 2.3.2). Rossouw (2002:3) argues that ethics concerns itself with what is good or right in human interaction – it reflects on the quality and purpose of the interaction between the self and *an other*. ‘Good, right and quality’ are in turn described by values and norms, and language definitions reflect how closely interwoven ethics is with moral principles, morality, values, just processes and justice (Pearsall 2001:489,768,925,1584).

Ethical transformation of a workplace culture would require actions of particular quality to better the workplace, making it good and right. To my mind, participatory, collaborative, honouring and respectful practices in organisations, as discussed by Roux and Kotzé (2002:154), are about doing ethics. In context of workplace transformation, Roux considers himself a participating facilitator (Roux & Steyn 2002:159). As narrated in Chapter 4, I found myself in the role of participating facilitator, and I relied on ethics to guide and support me. Ethics forms a main theme throughout this study and its support of transformation will be illustrated wherever appropriate.

*Ethics* is applied in many ways and contexts throughout the study. The following description of identified sub-parts is offered to explain these diverse applications. To my mind, *ethics* consist of:

- a defining part** – the morals, values, intuitions and emotions that lie beneath an action or ethic. Awareness of the defining part could help facilitators and participants to understand other viewpoints,
- an action part** – (a) doing values and morality with other people. As an example: it would be pointless to promote trust as the single most important value in business (Nicholson 2000:184) and then not *do* (practice) trust consistently in own behaviour and in all relationships, and (b) 'a method of being, acting and reflecting that is self-reflexive, yet still maintains ethical and political integrity' (Graham 1996:156).
- a reflexive part** – asking who is benefiting from a particular action (Kotzé 2002:14) to what effect on *an other* (Rossouw 2002:3).

In terms of the research curiosity (Chapter 1), I discuss and apply ethics in this context to business and the workplace. In my experience, the pre-modernist and modernist way of creating workplace ethics resides in management considering themselves in control of scientific business (and/or religious) truths (Kotzé 2002:14). A prescriptive process leaves the workplace members on the receiving end, marginalised and alienated and obviously without a say in how the 'truths' of the prescriptions are created (:16). Such prescriptions are reminiscent of colonial domination when civilization, commerce and Christianity were forced onto the recipients (Chapter 1). Reynolds (1997:84) quotes Frederick Taylor, the 'father' of scientific management, who formulated his ideas at the turn of the twentieth century, as being fond of telling workers:

You are not supposed to think. Other people are paid for thinking around here.

Kotzé (2002:18) argues for participatory ethics as an alternative to prescriptive ethics, which is not to imply that 'anything-goes' and does not invite anarchy or

chaos. In the workplace context, participatory ethics would require an ethical awareness (:18) and empowerment of those people who could be considered marginalised and silenced. Awareness and empowerment of people are discussed in Paragraph 2.4.4.

Ethics that includes plurality and is truly participatory would require the participation of all in a workplace (Kotzé 2002:18). The participation of all includes higher (or invisible) management – the so-called knowledgeable people (who are actually in power), as well as the workplace members (Bonczek & Menzel 1994:15,16). Mary Midgley (quoted in Pattison 1993:207) contributes a feminist perspective on participatory ethics and considers it absurd to abstract elements of intuition and emotion from ethical thinking and moral action.

Roodt (1997:28) argues that business ethics has surfaced as a key area of management concern affecting the internal and external affairs of a company. Ethics has a direct link to the sustained profitability of a company (:30). Workplace benefits attributable to ethics are improved communications, improved interpersonal relations and confidence that employee and management relations are inspired to higher standards (Bonczek & Menzel 1994:13).

The risks of unethical behaviour in business are considerable. Unethical behaviour has been cited as main reasons to the recent financial crisis facing large American corporate businesses (and the global financial world), notably the ENRON Corporation and telecommunications giant, WorldCom (Benson 2002:1). The Star (:1) ran a front page story (with photograph for all to see), of Bernard Ebbers, founder and now resigned CEO of WorldCom, under the heading:

**WORLD IN CRISIS And this is the cheat who did it**

One can imagine what social construction happens from the immense scale of personal trauma and misery a corporate crisis causes due to job losses, effects on families, extended families and the supplier and investment communities.

## **2.4 Social construction**

From a post-modern viewpoint all meaning, and truth for that matter, is constructed, not discovered (Groothuis 1999:53). The notion of truth corresponding to an objective and knowable reality is rejected. Through the use of words and language – multiple descriptions (truths) of the same situation – we give meaning to our worlds (Gergen 1999:34,35). Social constructionism radically doubts a taken-for-granted view of the world and invites one to challenge the objective basis of conventional knowledge (Gergen 1985:267). Social constructionist inquiry is concerned with the development of meaning of the processes whereby people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live (:266). Social construction is evident in the reflective approach to the study (Chapter 1) and in the stories of workplace culture (Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

Not only do people construct their worldviews through language, but also through social interaction in relationship with bodies of knowledge, which Foucault calls discourses (McHoul & Grace 1993:26). Discourses act to both constrain and enable what we can know (:37). According to Foucault, discourses also always function in relation to power relations and the role of power in the production of knowledge, including self-knowledge (:39,75). Knowledge can cause some people to be in the know and others not, and thereby leads to positions of privilege and power (for those in the know). Power relations have the capacity to ‘produce’ the truths we live by (:58).

In pastoral therapy practice, social construction provides a meaningful epistemology to use conversation as a means to help people (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:27). Conversations assist my interpretation of situations by asking for perspectives of people within situations. Through conversation and co-constructed epistemology, people could be supported to become more aware of and more empowered toward the co-creation of their realities.

In the practice of transformation of a South African workplace culture, I believe in the potential of new, co-constructed and alternative stories (White & Epston,

1990:15,16). This new social construction is animated by the choice to embrace our cultural diversity and invite aspects from this diversity for the common good of the workplace community (Lessem & Nussbaum, 1996:13,19).

#### ***2.4.1 Social construction and transformation of workplace culture***

To my mind the cultural diversity and common good of a workplace community are key aspects of alternative stories of workplace culture transformation. The following discussions move the epistemology of social construction into application of the workplace culture and its transformation. These discussions are in turn applied in the research of Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

#### ***2.4.2 Workplace community and workplace culture***

A workplace community has a life of its own. This life is not merely due to its living members, but organisationally it expands, contracts, and lives or dies. Metaphorically, I consider a workplace community as having a mind (its will and self-awareness), a heart (its care), and limbs through which it interacts with its environment. *Ethos* is considered to be the *spirit* of a community, as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations (Pearsall 2001:490).

The self-awareness of a workplace community is its ability to be ethically reflexive of its power, of who benefits from its actions and the presence of justice within itself. The workplace community's will is inherent in the ethical qualities of its actions and interactions (discussed in Paragraph 2.4.4). How could a workplace culture be nurturing, if it is not caring? Care in a community could take its inspiration from participatory ethical care practices, especially the challenge to *do* care with each other, rather than wait to be cared for (discussed in Paragraph 2.3.2).

Applying Gerkin's (1991:14) views of unified and pluralist societies, I see the South African workplace increasing in cultural diversity and becoming more pluralist (discussed in Chapter 1). *Culture* would include ethnicity, gender, values, ethics, customs, knowledge, experience, behaviour, sexual preferences and political

orientation of a member in a workplace. In a culturally fragmented community, there is a high risk of loss of direction and unity concerning values and normative practices (:14). Under the duress of economic or social pressures, normative issues are often left alone and value contradictions remain unacknowledged (:14,15).

Individuals caught in the 'socio-cultural morass' of cultural fragmentation without direction often adopt a survival psychology in the communal world, whilst trying to keep their private lives together (Gerkin 1991:15; Sunter 1999:11-14). I believe the aforementioned, combined with effects of the discourse of capitalism, are some of the main contributors to workplace stress and trauma, discussed as background to the area of study in Chapter 1.

Workplace culture may be conscious, unconscious, agreed or implied – it is a social construction by its members. The co-construction takes place under the guidelines and intent of the community's business, subject to various discourses (capitalism, ethics, etc.), and the members' dominant stories and their shared cultures (Hess 1993:190).

From a social construction viewpoint, Freedman and Combs (1996:27) reflect on 'how people interact with one another to construct, modify, and maintain what their society holds to be true, real and meaningful'. Drawing on White and Epston's (1990:12,18,40-41) work on dominant stories, I regard *workplace culture* as the collective dominant story of the workplace community's members. Roux and Kotzé (2002:155) argue:

Thus, organisations are run or ruined by narratives. Organisations and the people working in organisations live a story and are constituted by multiple stories.

In Chapter 3, the dominant story of the factory in the research is described. That description also illustrates how the factory's dominant story as the workplace culture convinced the members that there was no hope, no trust and no care.

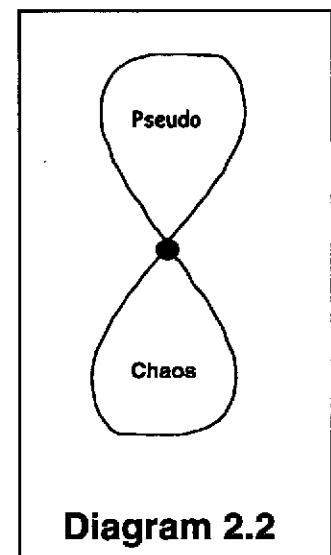
A circular relationship is noted between workplace culture and its members' cultures. Workplace culture requires particular behaviour, which requires individual cultural adaptation, which in turn is shared to co-constitute workplace cultures (Hess 1993:200). This circular relationship could keep the workplace community moving between particular dominant stories, as illustrated in Diagram 2.2.

In their work on community life cycles and community facilitation, Peck (1990:86-106) and the Foundation of Community Encouragement refer to a metaphor of four stages in a community's life cycle.

Diagram 2.2 illustrates how a (pre-transformation) community can move with two dominant stories – pseudo-community and chaos. These are two of Peck's four stages.

Pseudo-community - members fake being authentic with each other and pretend that they (and the workplace) have accepted each other's cultures.

Chaos – members attempt to heal and convert each other, members attack each other and their leader.



Peck (1990:94) argues that a community flowing through chaos has high potential for transformation. Gerkin (1991:14) believes that (workplace) communities of cultural diversity are at risk of tension and stress; yet they present opportunity to creative transformation. Cultural diversity offers a rich source of creativity, alternative stories and an opportunity to free subjugated, indigenous knowledges (White & Epston 1990:26,27). Alternative stories (:15,37) have the ability to change a community's reality and its culture. The roles of alternative stories are illustrated in Chapter 4 as part of the factory's transformation.

### **2.4.3 Witnesses of joy and trauma**

Members of workplace communities witness many events, some traumatic, others joyful. Weingarten (2000:392) argues in context of her work with trauma:

We are all always witnesses. People speak, we hear, whether we choose to or not. Events explode in front of us, whether we want to see or not.

I accept that people organise and give meaning to their experiences through the storying of experiences (White & Epston 1990:12,27). The question arises, what happens when a witness wants to voice his/her story? Who is going to listen and in what way? Weingarten (2000:392) considers that the witness, the witness' voice and the witness' community, are interrelated:

I saw voice not as an individual's achievement of self-knowledge but, rather, a possibility that depends on the willingness of the listeners that make up the person's community. In this view, voice is contingent on who listens with what attention and attunement.

The need to story experience and the importance of where that voice should be heard is reflected on in the discussion of workplace community in Paragraph 2.4.2. The witnessed story contributes to a community's dominant story and therefore to the workplace community's culture.

I have deep respect for the development of Weingarten's work on witnessing. However, in my belief in alternative stories (White & Epston 1990:26,27) and in the spirit of hope and *ubuntu* (Weingarten 2000:399-401), I believe that Weingarten's work on witnessing could be extended. As an alternative to witnesses of trauma, people could also be witnesses of joy, being symbolic of the alternative story. Such alternative story could include trust, success, wisdom, care and unique outcomes that would support ethical transformation. In Chapters 4 and 5 this extention of witnessing is illustrated in the recording of the factory's alternative stories.

Workplace culture could be positively affected in the circular relationship between culture and personal stories. Witnessing of joy would be the result of ethical actions as the quality of the actions would be good, in the interest of the common good (Paragraphs 2.3.4 and 2.3.5). On the one hand, more witnessing of joy implies an increased awareness of ethical and joyful events. On the other hand, more witnessing of joy implies that a quantitative increase in ethical and joyful events has taken place.

Awareness of more joyful events may be foreign, even in opposition, to the culture in many current workplaces. Primeaux and Mullen (1999:129) believe that business has a limitation with its rational ethics as it identifies so strongly with rational objectives. Business tends to either repress or ignore the emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of the total person. Alternatively, business tries to include the dimensions of the total person into its rational thinking, and then treats people as rational objects that should not smile too much, and not seem joyful!

#### ***2.4.4 The need for participant awareness and empowerment***

From her work on trauma and witnessing, Weingarten (2000:395,396) developed a typology of witnessing. In Diagram 2.3 (:397) the typology illustrates witness positions on an axis of awareness and empowerment symbolising that people change and so do their witness positions.

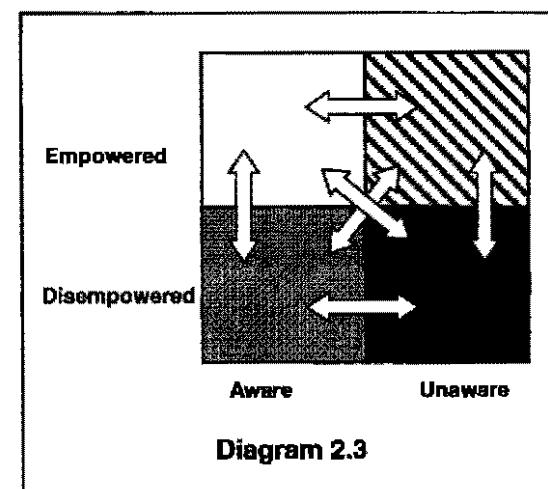
Weingarten (2000:395) does not mean to restrict people to the squares in Diagram 2.3, but rather to see each square as a time capsule of personal stories. She regards the unaware and empowered (striped) square as the witness position most dangerous to other people. She would prefer people to shift from the unaware and empowered position, and would argue it desirable for witnesses to be aware and empowered (in the white square) (:395,397).

Other than the extention to include witnessing of joy (Paragraph 2.4.3), I believe Weingarten's typology could be extended to include *participants* and not just witnesses. Weingarten (2000:400) believes that 'Ubuntu creates persons

simultaneously as participants and witnesses to everyone else in one's community'. In Chapter 5 the role of Simunye as an extension to Ubuntu is discussed in context of transformation at the factory. *Participants* is used to mean witnesses who are changing positions to participate in workplace transformation. In reply to a request for reflection, Weingarten (2002) was most supportive of the extension of her typology towards witnessing of joy and inclusion of participants: 'I am delighted that you are working with my ideas and extending them'.

Participants, who are moved to the action of ethical co-transformation, change positions to more awareness and more empowerment (Diagram 2.3).

As Weingarten (2000:397) would argue it desirable for witnesses to be aware and empowered, so the emphasis in the extension would be for aware and empowered participants.



A healthy workplace culture deserves and needs aware participants. Aware participants could be open to hear the voices of witnesses, be it for witnessing of joy or trauma. In this manner, workplace members do not only become aware of events, but also of the discourses shaping events (Gerkin 1991:15,16; McHoul & Grace 1993:37,58,59). Ethical awareness would imply a participatory consciousness (Kotzé 2002:5) of what is needed in a workplace community at a particular time (of crisis) to support a healthy workplace culture.

A healthy workplace culture also deserves and needs empowered participants. Empowerment is an ingredient of action once awareness has increased. For example, care is required to look after the heart of workplace culture. *Doing* care with people as opposed to caring for people requires people to be empowered. In order for participants to resist trauma, injustice or taking action to promote ethical behaviour, they need to be empowered.

The discussion of awareness and empowerment would not be complete without acknowledging resistance to awareness and empowerment. Awareness of trauma could be resisted as it implies the risk to grasp the experience of another, responsibility of having to act on knowing, and feeling the stress of a witness (Weingarten 2000:393,400). The frustration and fear might be high when a participant is aware, yet the participant might be disempowered to do anything about the awareness, and have the fear of not fitting into the workplace and losing his/her job (Weingarten 2000:398).

Those in power could resist awareness and empowerment by denying others knowledge, gained through awareness, and thereby keep others disempowered and themselves in power (McHoul & Grace 1993:59). Empowered, but unaware, people could do damage to others and the workplace culture and should move out of that position (Weingarten 2000:395). Management could well resist empowerment practices in fear of a person moving into an empowered, unaware, position.

Participants in workplace transformation are also part of social communities of family, friends and society. Transformation, by definition, would inspire and challenge participants to new values and behaviour and they could be challenged to reform, rather than continue conforming to those social communities (Bain 1986:322). Participant positions affect and influence others (Weingarten 2000:398) and reforming behaviour could be very challenging. Therefore fear of social rejection could increase participants' resistance to transformation.

Reynolds (1997:84) argues that high trust organisations ensure reliability of actions by making people accountable for their actions. Transformation participants could well resist becoming empowered for fear of accountability.

As showed in Chapter 5, co-transformed workplace culture, care and trust supported transformation participants to overcome resistances to awareness and empowerment.

#### **2.4.5 Workplace culture co-transformation**

Freedman and Combs (1996:27) argue that co-transformation is the deliberate social construction of a social epistemology of interactions between people. From previous discussions, I deduct that such deliberate social construction would be ethical if aware and empowered transformation participants support transformation. Co-transformation therefore happens within participatory ethics, awareness and empowerment.

The narrative component of ethical transformation would not consider workplace members as the problem, as White and Epston (1990:16,40) believe the problem is the problem and people's relationship with the problem becomes the problem. A traditional people-problem-focused approach might, in context of Chapter 3, have fired many staff from the factory. As Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate, nobody was dismissed. The same people in the factory's dominant story co-constructed the factory's culture transformation.

As previously argued, the collective dominant story of the workplace members' stories contributes considerably to workplace culture. White and Epston (1990:15,16) argue for alternative stories that support the co-discovery of unique outcomes (:16,31). To my mind, co-transformation of workplace culture would therefore focus on supporting workplace members to co-discover personal alternative stories, in the co-construction of the workplace's collective alternative story. By externalising problems, the problems and discourses affecting workplace culture can be addressed as workplace members seek alternative relationships with those problems and discourses.

How does a transformed workplace differ from a pre-transformed workplace? From a social constructionist perspective, I believe there is not a definitive, objective, perfect scientific solution or model. Instead, workplace members will have to come up with a tailor-made answer to this question. In my role of prophetic ethical transformation leadership, I had the opportunity to invite

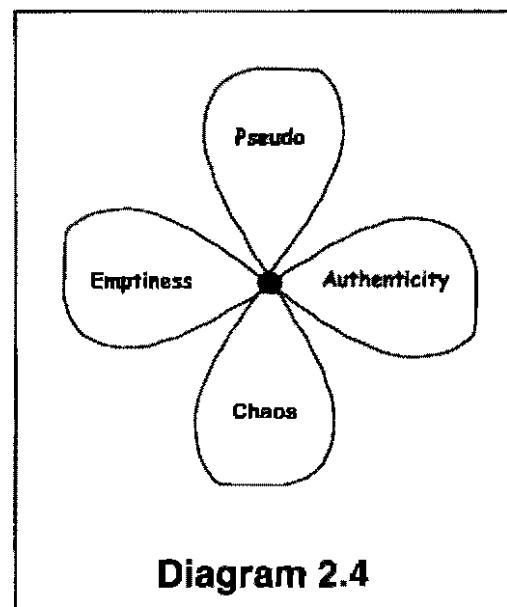
transformation participants to reflect on transformation possibilities. From these reflections, participants chose their journeys of co-transformation.

Considering workplace trauma, injustice and stress in (discussed in Chapter 1), I believe transformed workplaces could at least include more ethics – members being in authentic community, being more nurturing and caring, more spiritual and ecologically interactive. Transformed workplace culture would be more committed to affect and promote social transformation and to co-construct unique, sustainable humanness and profitability models.

The opportunity for a new workplace culture is reflected in Eden's (2000:26) comments on new corporate consciousness, noted in America, with some signs visible in South Africa (:26-28):

Business is still about making money, but now it's also about making a difference to individuals and to the whole of humanity. It's not just philanthropy that's behind this drive, but sound economic sense. Employees are not machines, they bring feelings, values and belief systems to work. Factor these into company policy and the result is a more content, loyal and stable workforce. Creativity soars, productivity improves and profits increase.

Workplace members could be in authentic community with each other as part of the journey of transformation. The discussion of Peck (1990:86-106) and the Foundation of Community Encouragement's metaphor of the stages in a community's life cycle is concluded here. Diagram 2.4 represents a four-leaf clover as a metaphor for the miracle of authentic community.



An authentic community can flow between two (new) alternative stories (stages) – emptiness and authenticity (Diagram 2.4).

Emptiness – members empty themselves from barriers to communication. These barriers include expectations and preconceptions, prejudices, ideologies, theologies, needs to heal, fix, to solve, to convert and the needs for control. The communication focus is internal and reflective.

Authenticity – community members interact and relate to each other with a sense of sacredness, compassion, love, care and nurturing (Peck 1990:103-106). Within authentic community, communication is of a very different nature than the norm – it is where the voices of witnesses are respected, valued and honoured, without judgment.

When workplace members go home at the end of a day or shift, are they expected to conform to the social structures they go back to, or to help reform those social structures (Bain 1986:323)? To my mind, a caring and nurturing workplace culture also cares about its members' private lives and supports them in the task of reformation. Keeping in mind the circular relationship between social and institutional reform (Clinebell & Seifert 1969:9), the progress of social reform is of utmost importance.

Co-transformation of workplace culture requires prophetic ethical pastoral leadership. This would not be prescriptive leadership, or typical change management practices, or instruction with new spiritual content (Eden 2000:27). Prophetic ethical pastoral leadership could draw on all the facets represented in its name, and it could also draw on the epistemology forming the basis of this chapter. Business managers and transformation practitioners, committed to ethical co-transformation, could draw on these practices without becoming pastors or pastoral therapists. This is not to say that skill, insight and experience are not required. For the humanness of transformation, ethical awareness and care practices will remind us of who is benefiting from the transformation.

## **2.5 Reflection**

True to a postmodern perspective, there could be no final word, no final objective truth conclusion to this chapter. As epistemology is dynamic – ever evolving – the epistemology of this chapter not only underpins the study, it was in turn informed by the study.

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## ***Chapter 3. Dominant stories – the factory must make money, but what about workplace culture?***

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### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter positions the study mainly in the factory's dominant stories. These dominant stories are seen in the context of some discourses of capitalism as an extension to workplace trauma and injustice, as discussed in Chapter 1. The intention of this chapter is to illustrate how the odds were stacked against the factory's survival, in context of capitalism discourses.

From a narrative approach, Morgan (2000:5) argues that personal stories link certain events of lived experiences together in particular sequences across time. Personal stories find ways of explaining or making sense of these linked events and as discussed in Chapter 2, personal stories as social constructions constitute people's realities.

The research of the factory's workplace culture happened by way of stories and comments from the research participants taking part in the study. As argued in Chapter 2, the stories of workplace members form a dominant story, which in turn contributes to that of the workplace's culture. The stories underlying this chapter converge as the research participants' stories from within the factory, and my story from the outside. My story is told to represent alternative views parallel to the factory's dominant stories, and to position the start of my role in the factory's alternative stories.

For clarity of formulation, my use of *us*, *our* and *we* means all my former factory colleagues including myself. *Family* is how *we* came to call ourselves as 'the people of the factory', and to this day continue doing so. When I refer to the *factory staff* it means people from the factory in all organisational levels, before *we* became a

*family*. In order for formulation to be gender sensitive, I prefer using *their* and *them* instead of she/he.

### ***3.1.1 Notes on the research process***

Research preparations for the study started through informal discussions and reflections with members of the *family* in April 2002. Feedback from the *family* indicated the need for a research meeting, which was held as a participatory research group on June 26, 2002. As many people could not attend the research meeting, research participants were invited to bring messages and stories from the rest of the *family*. In this manner we would be able to re-member absent voices (Morgan 2000:77-79), including stories from the *family's* deceased brothers and sister.

Reflecting on the composition of the research group in terms of race, gender and positions of power and leadership, the participants agreed that the research group is a fair representation of the *family*. Four women and nine men attended the research meeting, of whom five people were afro-African (so-called black) and eight people were euro-African (so-called white). Another afro-African woman, and an euro-African man did not attend the research meeting, but participated in the research via e-mail, postal mail and/or telephone conversations.

In our research meeting, the research curiosity and aims were reviewed. The participants also discussed knowledge and power, pastoral care, ethics, workplace culture and the relationships between social reform and workplace reform. It was agreed to reply independently, in written format, to the meeting's research questions, which are listed in Addendum A. Personal names in the text mean references to the research participants, by their preferred pseudonyms.

This chapter was co-created between the research participants and myself. The participants reflected on the first draft I had written. From their reflections, comments, inclusions and deletions a second draft was produced. Reflection and

incorporation happened until the participants were satisfied that we had achieved our preferred narrative, reflecting what Maykut and Morehouse (1994:169) call a 'recognisable reality'.

### ***3.1.2 Introducing the research participants***

As previously discussed, the research participants' voices are heard in the text by use of their preferred pseudonyms. In order to connect the reader with cultural and organisational identities, the research participants are introduced personally in alphabetical order:

Belina:	afro-African woman – financial assistant,
Bokkie:	euro-African man – director of works,
Cas:	euro-African man – engineer,
Faan:	euro-African man – finance manager,
Freddy:	euro-African man – manager quality,
George:	euro-African man – sales manager exports,
Grace:	afro-African woman – shop steward,
Julie:	euro-African woman – production manager,
Rob:	euro-African man – sales manager,
Pieter:	euro-African man – sales manager,
Prudence:	afro-African woman – human potential manager,
Su:	euro-African woman – executive assistant,
Soweto:	afro-African man – shop steward,
Solly:	afro-African man – finishing supervisor,
Vincent:	afro-African man – shop steward.

### ***3.1.3 Self-narrative in the study***

It is practice for authors to include their personal stories in their writing (Ackermann 1996:32; Kotzé 2002:23-25; Weingarten 2000:389-391). To my mind, personal stories support the context of work and contribute to the richness of the contents. Laird quoted by Ackermann (1996:48), calls an individual's story a 'self-

'narrative' within other narratives. This term is used in the study to imply more than just my one story from one perspective.

*My self-narrative represents my reflections as pastoral therapist, business consultant, Managing Director (MD), researcher, euro-African male, my witnessing of events and my participation in events.*

*I believe my self-narrative supports the context of the research and forms an integral part of the research. The self-narrative is offered with sensitivity, and not as an ego trip. Yet, I had been the manager through which pastoral care practices and the epistemology (as given in Chapter 2) had been introduced into the experience that is being researched. For clarity, the self-narrative is indented and written in italics.*

### **3.1.4 'Old speak' - the language of old style capitalism**

In their book *Beyond reasonable greed: why sustainable business is a much better idea*, Visser and Sunter (2002:21) invite business to consider the discourses undergirding current capitalism and business practices. They argue:

[Companies] do not recognise that the rules of the game are changing in radical ways that will soon make their cherished business thinking and practices obsolete.

To my mind current business practices have been obsolete for quite some time. I refer to obsolete business practices and their undergirding discourses as old style capitalism. Visser and Sunter (2002:42) also argue that the discourses undergirding capitalism are maintained very actively by power and by people – the actions of managers and the greed of shareholders:

As most economists and business managers will tell you (if they are being honest rather than politically correct), the incentives in our current economic system make it almost impossible not to choose profits over people and the planet. Economists will talk about 'market failure',

'externalities' and the 'tragedy of the commons', while managers know that it comes down to social and environmental considerations simply being too costly in the face of unrelenting pressure from shareholders and others to make better returns and to achieve higher growth rates.

*I use two languages in the study. My preferred language is the language from my epistemology (Chapter 2). Occasionally I use the language of old style capitalism, which I refer to as 'old speak'.*

*From a social constructionist perspective (discussed in Chapter 2), 'old speak' is also used as a reminder that old business language constitutes an old style corporate reality. If 'old speak' sounds alien and offensive, it is to offer an insight via language into workplace stress and trauma as many business people and business structures still function within that reality.*

### **3.2 How were things really at the factory?**

In the opinion of consulting colleagues of mine, expressed in 'old speak', the factory was past its use-by-date. That meant the business had lost too much market share, the product and manufacturing machinery were considered past their life-use, and the business was therefore not worthy of further investment. Current, 'old style capitalism', business practice indicate closure of such a factory. In old style capitalism, people in a business past its use-by-date are often discarded as past their use-by-dates as well. Who cares about the people at a factory under these conditions and business thinking?

The factory was losing up to R1 million per month and shareholders were not tolerant of those type of losses if they were not certain they could expect considerable returns. The research participants described the last few years at the factory as chaotic and senseless, reminding one of pre-transformation workplace community caught in dominant stories; cycles of chaos and pseudo-community, discussed in Chapter 2.

Freddy recalled that a previous MD predicted that the factory would last between six months and five years. Soweto, Su and Belina recalled that staff was expecting closure anytime.

### ***3.2.1 Lost market share and business war***

In the mid 80's the factory had been the market leader with large market share. By 2001, the factory had lost its leadership, competitors gained market share from the factory's mistakes and alternative technologies became competitive. Manufacturing over capacity by too many competitors had driven profitability down, on top of which the total market had been shrinking drastically over the last ten years. Bokkie recalled ten sister factories in the 80's, having been reduced to one by 2001.

Visser and Sunter (2002:19) note that Western corporate culture is saturated with military jargon, such as: formulating strategies, fighting competition, deploying sales forces, targeting customers and employing marketing tactics. In 'old speak' the factory's competitors had not only been engaged in fierce fighting for market share, but within the shrinking market they were fighting for survival.

When shareholders become impatient and panicky because they could lose their money, the fight for survival means business war in 'old speak'. In business war, a losing company closes its doors – it dies and people lose their jobs. Sadly, business wars are very costly in terms of workplace stress, job losses and often to the detriment of clients. By all accounts the factory was losing a war, the dimensions, agendas and discourses of which, it wasn't even fully aware off.

### ***3.2.2 An old product and a cash-cow that was milked to death***

The factory's main product had been in the decline phase of its product life cycle for many years. This decline was mirrored in the market and product image, which had not been refreshed significantly during the last ten years. Products were seen as mere products and staff had stopped respecting products as their livelihood (Freddy). There were quality problems – too many production rejects and too

many failures in the field (George). In a comment reminding of a chaos-type community phase (Chapter 2), Solly believed that people in the factory cared for products, but that the Boss was careless.

The factory staff had been advising head office over many years to rejuvenate the product and align it with international standards. The factory's production manager, the director of works, the export manager and engineer had been on European visits to gather information and survey technology and plants to rejuvenate the product. Yet, head office refused to invest the required funds. For too long no capital had been ploughed back for new product development.

Head office seemed to have followed the old style capitalism cash-cow business strategy. The factory was milked of the cash it produced during the good times, the cash was used elsewhere and no funds were re-invested in the business. When such a cow is no longer needed, just discard it, or let it be killed in the business wars. To my mind milking a company to death and then discarding it and its people, is unethical. Workplace trauma is inflicted when a workforce remains loyal to the end and is made redundant when the owners have completed their agenda and discards a company. The bottom line according to Rob was that the factory and the product had failed to change with the times.

### ***3.2.3 Production relied on a carcinogenic substance***

A carcinogenic substance (name and identifying aspects changed for confidentiality) was used in the factory's main manufacturing process. This substance, its uses and the various industries involved in its production process, had steadily been receiving increased adverse publicity and pressure from health groups. Some large health claims had been awarded by the courts to people in the production of the substance and other industries further down the supply chain feared their turn was coming. Head office was under pressure from its shareholders and from business analysts to move away from using the carcinogenic substance.

Bokkie feared that excluding this particular raw material could lead to immediate closure of the factory as no replacement raw material had been identified. Julie and Cas had not received funding or support from head office to develop a replacement technology, although opportunities had been identified and communicated.

In the business war competitors had been using the factory's reliance on the carcinogenic substance to their fullest advantage. In 'old speak', competitors were targeting the reliance on the substance in their marketing tactics, cited the growing public awareness and promoted clients' doubt through dis-information on health issues (Rob).

### ***3.2.4 Abused workplace culture and low staff morale***

Factory staff had been working under the (spoken and unspoken) threat of closure for the last five years and had been subjected to various management styles, practices and power. The research participants' stories (limited to a few lines each due to space restriction) are an indication of the workplace culture at the time:

**Belina:** Employees did not have any idea about the company making profit or loss; they were just working as long as they were getting paid. They did not worry about making rejects. They did not care about each other.

**Freddy:** There was no need for pride, efficiency or relationships and enormous distrust for management and the shop floor. No culture that could be of any value to the factory was evident and blaming was at the order of the day.

**Soweto:** 'Us and them', no trust between people on the floor and management and no working relationship between the two. There were bosses and boys; absenteeism was high; a don't-care attitude towards work and no love for one another. People were told what to do, not asked.

- Rob: There was no care between management and employees; the thinking was to get results regardless of who had to be 'moved'. Lying, cover-ups and misrepresentation were commonplace amongst members of all levels of management, with no trust between colleagues.
- Julie: People were managed by fear. People knew what to do but were not trusted and empowered. Have a problem; call in consultants (in eighteen months four different consultants) – which were destructive. No care for people – here's a plan on paper; brilliant but bugger the people.
- Bokkie: The factory and its people had a specific culture, typical of mid 50's remote rural areas. Acceptance of accountability was almost non-existent. The factory lost its NOSA safety grading (5 star), which was a clear indication of it not caring for its most important asset (its people).
- Grace: 'Things were not too good because there was no trust between employees and management; they were changing [Managing] Directors, and they [head office] never call the meeting why we're doing that. Even if they have meetings, they never give us the report back'.
- George: There was autocratic management style. Staff members were negative. There was an atmosphere of insecurity and 'us and them' atmosphere between workforce and management. Care existed differently on different levels and by different managers – it was not a general 'care culture'.
- Solly: People did not have a say; grievances were not taken, promotion to high rank were given to white people. People did not know why they were there, people were not happy and people did not feel being treated as humans.

Su: Symptoms of problems were addressed and not the causes. There was a seesaw of hope and worry – imminent closure and very little care for the people. Workers were not recognised as human beings who had feelings and reasons for functioning as they did.

Vincent: 'Workers are working but their leaders did not care about their life. Workers did not have a right to say, they were not consulted even if they have a representative. They were not considered as part of the company'.

Cas: The spirit was rather low, there was no care or concern for employees.

Reflecting on the above, I believe the *family* was saying that the factory's workplace culture was caught in dominant stories of trauma, stress, no care, no respect, power abuse and little empowerment. They were in cycles of chaos and pseudo-community (Chapter 2).

Weingarten (2000:393) argues that witnesses of violations and trauma, take risks to grasp what they have witnessed and that they struggle to render to others what they have witnessed. I believe the staff (and head office) had to an extent given up hope for the factory. After witnessing so much trauma and things going wrong, they did not know how to render to others or to each other their feelings of hopelessness.

### **3.2.5 What about governance and trust?**

When considering the discussions in the previous sections, it is important to remember the factory's governance on levels of the Board of Directors, the MD and the Management Team.

In his book *The fish rots from the head* on directorship and corporate governance, Garratt (1997:1-6) argues that effective directing supports a company's survival and increases its chances to thrive. With Garratt's book in mind, I listened to market perceptions and had discussions with other business consultants. The

general opinion was that the factory's situation was in large attributed to unethical governance by its directors.

*Most of the factory's directors were still at head office when I accepted the consulting brief. I was concerned if they would be willing to consider new, urgently required, ways.*

*I wondered what head office's position was towards the factory. Head office was also a 50% shareholder in one of the factory's direct (profitable) competitors! To my mind this was a serious ethical position of conflict, and in response to my questions I was told to focus on the factory because the competitor was profitable and not my concern.*

*Was head office keeping the factory to write off taxes elsewhere in its group of companies? Were they trying to sell the factory to a competitor? Had they intended to close the factory all along, and appointed me as the scapegoat MD who would do their dirty work? Was another agenda being followed that I could not even think of? Who could I trust to be honest with me?*

In the business world strategies are built, and corporate politics are played, around truth and knowledge. From a post-modern viewpoint truth is constructed, not discovered (Groothuis 1999:53). Truth and knowledge are often co-constructed between business executives, their friends, contacts and supporters. In this manner certain people are in the know with privileged knowledge. White and Epston (1990:21) agree with Foucault that knowledge and power are inseparable and power of truths can subjugate people (:20). Therefore executives in the know with privileged knowledge and power have an advantage over employees that are not in the know. Executives often decide on employees' fate without their awareness.

I agree with Reynolds (1997:4) that in today's intensely competitive world, trust is a 'must have' and a cornerstone value in ethics. Trust is especially needed in the

relationship between MDs and their boards, MDs and head office and MDs and their management teams.

As previously argued, the factory was in a business war of survival. Executives at the factory's head office, with its shareholding in a competitor and other business interests, would probably feed an MD knowledge/truth to further their interests. How could an MD trust a head office under such conditions and how would an MD's colleagues trust head office motives and actions? Winston Churchill is quoted by Cave Brown (1984:i) in context of the protection of truth during war:

In times of war, truth is so precious, she should at all times be attended by a bodyguard of lies.

Considering management and the influence of head office on the factory, the research participants remembered the time at the factory before my arrival:

Jutie believes that ethics at head office was bad and had permeated to all levels. People meant nothing and were continuously being treated in unethical ways. Head office tried to correct the performance of the factory by changing the MD's.

Rob remembers: 'It was bizarre that we went through so many MD's; there was no care.' The market perception was that incompetent people ran the factory. There was a lack of coherent strategy and direction (Bokkie) as new MDs were constantly drawing up strategy plans but never got to implement them before the next MD arrived (George). A culture of 'scapegoating' was fostered, and management targeted specific individuals as scapegoats (George).

Soweto believes that 'managers had too much power to just do what they wanted, without worrying of how people got hurt, that is why we (the factory) are folding.' George confirmed this comment by adding that there were too many autocratic management styles.

Su, recalled that the MDs' styles varied from extremely autocratic to staying hidden in the office, or constantly interfering in the manufacturing plant or focusing too much on sales figures. The common denominator was that all of them did not connect with people. 'You did as you were told. You were not paid to think.'

Julie remembers the 'cutthroat styles'. New managers came in with preconceived ideas and did not respect positive things; they just wanted to change everything. The MDs all arrived with the same story; to cut staff levels, which sounded like head office briefs. Although all MDs had autocratic power styles, they were brown-nosing with head office to play along and to survive. One had to submit or adjust personal ethics to deal with these MDs; they were spineless and made no proper decisions.

The above discussion intended to track effects of managerial power on the factory's people and workplace culture under custodianship of Directors and previous MD's. A head office and a Board of Directors cannot be without any blame since it remains their duty to be aware of the effects of directing and managing. The current large American corporation failures confirm the need for awareness, ethics and accountability by its Directors (Naughton 2002:34,35).

The factory's fourth euro-African male MD (in 5 years) had suddenly resigned in May 2001, only after six months in the position. I had to start as soon as possible.

### **3.4 Consulting brief versus personal commitment**

The overt consulting brief was to return the factory to profitability. To be more profitable, revenues had to be increased and/or costs cut. It was not spelled out to me at what costs and sacrifices the return to profitability was to be achieved, but I could well imagine it would include typical old style capitalism staff cuts. Visser and

Sunter (2002:44) illustrate a winning business with the metaphor of the fastest ancient Greek warship in which the rowing crew was lashed most severely.

The covert consulting brief, should profits not return, was to close the factory down. I was not to discuss the covert brief with anyone. Head office was not clear on the agenda with the carcinogenic substance, and I interpreted this as having some time to pursue the overt brief.

### ***3.4.1 Accepting the assignment***

A 'magician expert turn-around consultant' was required to return the factory to profitability. The personnel agent, who approached me for the assignment, recalled my first reaction to the assignment as an 'absolute no' (Bierman 2002).

*My main objections to the assignment were ethical and a perceived risk of career suicide. Ethically, I did not want to involve myself with carcinogenic raw materials. However, my own research and consultation convinced me that factory staff were at very low health risk. Once the raw material was set into product, there was no environmental or health risk. Additionally, I was informed of a possible exit strategy from the carcinogenic material, (discussed in the next section).*

*My second ethical concern was that I did not want to be part of workplace abuse, or exploiting the factory staff under false pretences of saving the factory. Head office convinced me they were sincere in giving the factory a last chance.*

*From a career perspective I was concerned that I would be set up for failure by trying to save an operation (against such high odds). In context of the previous discussions, I also felt at risk for being set up as the MD who had to do the dirty work of closing down the factory.*

*My spiritual and emotional resistance was dissolved in time. As with the biblical prophets, I experienced God in dreams and visions calling me to*

*accept the assignment and to trust the process. At the same time, doors to other consulting opportunity were closing on me, yet this door remained open. I felt a strong calling from the people at the factory – there was a need for care and workplace ethics. It was clear to me to trust spiritual guidance and to trust the process – if I walked in my faith and ethics, then the journey could be right for everyone!*

*I agreed with myself that I would accept the assignment if I could co-discover new ways with my future colleagues, and I could work from my personal commitment.*

I commenced the assignment in July 2001 and managed until my departure in January 2002.

### ***3.4.2 Under two management hats - ethical care and capitalism***

In context of the dilemma between personal ethics and the interests of capitalism, Nash (1993:213) quotes a senior executive from the Harvard Business School Advanced Management Program:

I always seem to be wearing two hats: my private hat and my corporate hat. On questions of conscience, they often tell me two very different things.

Nash (1993: 214) argues that an individual cultivates multiple personas to cope with the fragmented social experiences, which they encounter. This means a person is at the same time a family person, workplace member, company ambassador, loyal citizen and a member of social structure. Because these roles do not carry identical values, especially in workplaces where individuals often do not have a say in values and workplace culture, they cause ethical difficulties. Aware leaders and people in positions of power over other people, find the ethical interplay especially challenging. Nash (:214) comments in term of managers:

A manager continually faces internal conflicts between what he or she would do as a loyal representative of the company and what a private individual, friend, consumer, or citizen would think is right. Keeping the conflicts between one's non-corporate perspective and one's managerial obligations in a state of balance, or even integration, is one of the most difficult responsibilities of the ethical executive.

Corporate governance of morality is becoming topical in companies, and directors and managers are being challenged to assume [ethical] responsibilities that are often new and untested (Rossouw 2002:141). Nash (1993: 215) believes the conflict between a person's private and corporate persona causes a dilemma when one deals with people and when one acts as the representative of a power structure.

*Under my hat of pastoral therapy praxis and in my commitment to the consulting assignment, I have chosen for participatory ethical care, discussed in Chapter 2. I have therefore chosen for the well-being of people and in this choice, I answer to ethical reflection and self-reflection. From the discussion of ethics in Chapter 2, I question the quality of my actions with 'an other' and ask who would be benefiting from my actions.*

*My other hat was that of MD of a business. Under that hat I was supposed to be part of the current (modernist) capitalist discourse of making money first and foremost (Manning 2001:29). During the consulting assignment I reported to a head office that functioned in, as Visser and Sunter (2002:12) consider, old style capitalism: 'the prevailing paradigm of success which is purely financial'.*

### **3.4.3 Personal commitment**

The assignment was neither approached according to a specific business model, nor with a pre-determined set of interventions in mind. In retrospect, as an effect of the study, I have now identified the commitment of my consulting approach. I

did not understand or articulate my commitment at the time of the assignment and in Chapter 6 comment on this issue.

Due to prior corporate management experience, I expected my values and integrity to be challenged at the factory, and particularly by head office. I resolved to remain true to my ethics, *praxis* and practical business acumen.

As discussed in Chapter 2, I had chosen for participatory ethical care and believed that our new factory workplace culture would benefit from the idea. I would invite my colleagues to do such care with each other and me.

Due to narrative training and experience I would not accept the dominant story as the final state of the factory and its future. I would co-search for unique outcomes with my colleagues via alternative stories. The dominant story of the factory was a serious adversary to hope. This externalising viewpoint and language for the dominant story supported my courage and belief in unique outcomes. As White and Epston (1990:16,40) argue for externalisation, I would focus on the people of the factory as people, focus on the problems as problems, and the relationships people had with the problems, as problems.

As discussed in Chapter 2, workplace culture transformation would require aware and empowered participants. I would support people to become aware of workplace trauma and injustice, and to support people in becoming more empowered to resist workplace injustice.

As theological approach, I would work from a contextual theology perspective. This meant to be spiritually inspired, to be intimately aware of the situation, choose for the subjugated and employ prophetic qualities to support transformation.

From a commitment to ethics, I would promote the factory's exit from the carcinogenic raw material. In addition to my style of managing by walking around, I committed myself to visit the factory and installation sites as often as possible to monitor the health standards first-hand.

To my mind, it was clear that head office's cash-cow mentality had to be changed and I committed myself to co-rejuvenate market interest, pride and trust in the product.

I accepted that strong prophetic ethical leadership would be required. I would lead strongly, but only *with* my colleagues by participation, consultation and their empowerment. It was not in my nature, nor would I become a corporate hyena and fire or abuse people (Marais & Herman 1997:10-13). Neither would I become a charismatic leader resulting in staff's dependency on me.

I committed myself to co-create a practical and sustainable business model with my factory colleagues, trusting that sustained profitability would follow. If time and funding would not allow a return to profitability, then I would initiate an ethical withdrawal from the market. The factory could then be closed with care, ethics and dignity for all stakeholders. In order to promote trust, I decided to be honest. This honesty included discussing my covert consulting brief and all head office news appertaining to the factory.

### **3.5 In summary**

White and Epston (1990:18-19,40-41) argue that dominant stories can occupy so much attention, that existing and working functionalities become forgotten and neglected. I believed that the attention of the factory's workplace culture was held by the dominant stories discussed in this chapter. As argued before, these dominant stories showed how the odds were stacked against the factory. From these odds it appeared as if the situation was quite hopeless and that there was no future for the factory.

I believe that a problem cannot be fixed with the same mindset that was part of its creation, and to my mind we needed change at the factory. Not only would change be needed, but transformation as a different way of being (Barrett 1998:13). In the search for unique outcomes, transformation cannot be prescriptive, but have to be

part of new co-constructions. Within this new co-constructed reality, one could expect changes in beliefs, ethics, hearts and minds and workplace culture. I prayed that head office would pursue its own transformation parallel to *our* efforts.

A risk of a people-caring approach is that it could appear to old style capitalism as too friendly, too soft, too slow and therefore ineffective. Barrett (1998:143-157) argues within the concepts of cultures of trust, meaning, community and ownership that organisations build human capital by caring for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of their employees (:143). Employees are motivated by work that gives their lives meaning and they tap into their highest levels of productivity and creativity when they see their efforts making a difference to each other, clients and society (:144).

The story of our co-transformation efforts, our experiences on that journey and the factory's alternative stories follow next, in Chapters 4 and 5.

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## **Chapter 4. Alternative stories - Lashona ilanga (the sun is setting – we must hurry with our business!)**

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### **4.1. Introduction**

In contrast to Chapter 3, this chapter positions the study in the factory's alternative story. It is an alternative story of a 'no way situation becoming a let's try culture' (Freddy) and changing the mood in the factory to 'positive with hope for the future' (George). Similarly to Chapter 3, the chapter has been co-constructed as a preferred narrative with the research participants. The formulation of self-narrative and the use of *family* continue.

In this chapter the study enters into reflective dialogue between practice, epistemology (Chapter 2) and the *family's* stories. This reflective dialogue takes place in search for richness, meaning and answers to the research curiosity, which was asked in Chapter 1. New literature references are introduced in the following discussions where needed to expand beyond the epistemology discussions of Chapter 2.

### **4.2. Commencing the assignment – just one opportunity to a fresh start**

*I was committed to participatory ethical care (Chapter 2) and to my consulting approach (Chapter 3) and therefore wanted to start in a respectful way, open to trust. In reflection with myself I hoped for relationships dedicated to the staff's benefit.*

*My appointment to the factory, as is practice with many managerial appointments elsewhere in business, was made without consulting the so-called beneficiaries of my management, the factory staff. Remembering the history of euro-African and European male Managing Directors (MD's) at the factory, I wondered why any of the factory's staff would trust me, as yet*

*another euro-African, male MD? On what grounds would I be trusted to play a leadership role at the factory?*

*From the outset I wanted to start searching for unique outcomes (White & Epston 1990:16,41) that would support the co-creation of the factory's alternative stories.*

*To my mind, seeking a unique outcome would include a journey of transformation, meaning a different way of being and change at the deepest levels of beliefs, values and assumptions (Barrett 1998:13). Transformation included myself, and from the start of the assignment I wanted to walk the talk of transformation.*

*I did not want to start in the typical power-traditional way of walking into the factory and claiming my office. I did not want to meet my 'subordinates' across my power-symbol-desk. Neither did I want to meet anyone across their identity-symbol-desks or at subordinated-symbol-places of work.*

The assignment was started by not starting at the factory; I started with the people of the factory. Julie recalled that I did not walk in and just started to change things.

#### **4.2.1 Meeting the factory's management team**

*In 'old speak' the factory's management team would be my direct reportees. In the language of a collaborative and participatory approach (Roux & Kotzé 2002:151) the management team and I would be direct colleagues. This alternative attitude was intended to deconstruct the power relationship implied in the typical hierarchy of MD and reportees.*

*I wanted to meet the management team as people first and foremost. By meeting each other as people, I hoped that we could start our management relationship and transformation journey together as fellow human beings.*

*I wondered on what grounds the team would accept me. Would they accept me, because it was expected of them? If I was not authentically accepted, we could find ourselves between the dominant stories of pseudo community and chaos (Chapter 2). What basis for trust would we have between us?*

Before my start at the factory, the management team agreed to meet with me for a day's workshop, away from the factory. George thought it a good idea to meet away from the factory. The meeting was requested with my letter of invitation, forwarded by the head office human resources manager. In the letter reflection was invited to help us prepare for the day's breakaway, and contained the following:

The letter explained my need and motives to meet outside of the work context.

I explained that I wanted to practice a participatory management style and I needed the team's input on what my contribution should be.

My understanding was communicated of tough times at the factory, yet that the team was keeping operations going. I enquired what unique contributions each manager was making at the factory.

The letter invited us a management group to consider using the day to search for possibilities for the future.

The managers were invited to reflect on what they needed to know from me to trust me on the journey ahead.

Managers where invited to reflect on the meaning of a manager's role in South Africa during the current world-times.

The new management team was invited to consider what the team members could do more in order to quickly form a team and remain a team.

The team was invited to reflect on their world-class qualities.

Reflectively, managers were asked which paradigms they considered needed shifting.

Ethical reflection asked about the quality of my actions and the effects on the team as *an other* (Chapter 2). What would work for the team and who would benefit? Instead of just pursuing an old style management relationship based on power and fear (Reynolds 1997:4), I hoped it was opportune for all of us to have an alternative relationship based on ethics and trust. I agree with Reynolds that 'trust is the key issue for business' (:5) and believe that interaction and co-operation rely on trust (Rossouw & Bews 2002:147).

Our workshop day started with my commitment; that should we not feel comfortable with one another to proceed by the end of the day, that I would withdraw from the consulting assignment. This attempt to restore justice as resistance to head office's prescriptive power of deciding for the management team's leadership, was extended further. As my consulting contract would have a three-month term at a time, my commitment also invited the management team to decide on extending the contract, when required. We applied this resistance and co-construction successfully at a later stage. When the management team required my continuation, with my agreement, we advised head office accordingly, and together succeeded in securing a timeous decision.

*I often wonder what would have happened had the management team decided at any point that they would not want to continue working with me? On the one hand, this power to decide could rid workplaces of abusive, unethical and non-performing managers in short time. On the other hand, would management teams get rid of managers that are too ethical and too challenging for their workplace cultures, especially when difficult transformation journeys are required?*

In order to invite our humanness into our conversation we told personal stories from our lives, remembering the qualities that helped us through hardships. These stories also invited each manager to tell of their personal qualities and contributions they made to the management team. This discussion in a way explored our landscapes of identity and actions (Morgan 2000:60-63) in preparation for co-creation of alternative stories (Chapter 2). Various managers

commented after the day, that due to these personal stories they knew more of one another than before, in some cases where they had been working together for many years.

The telling of my personal story started with a question, its principle having been adopted from working with pastoral therapist and lecturer Johann Roux: 'What do the management team need to know of me in order to trust me with the leadership role?' After offering information to the team's satisfaction, my story ended with an explanation of my approach to managing.

The workshop ended with a realisation of the challenges of transformation that we faced as a team. Confidence was expressed in each other and we committed to support each other, which included that I would continue with the team as the new MD. Rossouw and Bews (2002:148,149) argue that trust grows as a process whereby parties risk and prove that they do not damage each other's vulnerability. Although the team and I did not articulate our intended trust in this manner, we agreed to take risks of honesty and vulnerability with each other in order to support coming into community with each other (discussed in Chapter 2).

The general comment from the management team was that our start had been a unique experience at the factory and in their careers. It felt completely different to starting with any previous MD and that they had somehow experienced a feeling of hope. George expressed feeling 'enthusiastically surprised and looking forward to operating together'.

#### ***4.2.2 Meeting the rest of staff at the factory***

Due to production pressures and financial constraints, I could not meet the rest of the staff in day breakaways, although I would have preferred it that way. In retrospect, and remembering the many years of managerial abuse, meeting the staff in say at least half-day breakaways would have afforded invaluable opportunities to connect deeply with their trauma, wisdom and loyalty. Due to shift patterns, the next best alternative was to have short meetings of small groups, in canteens and offices during working hours.

The factory's staff consisted mainly of afro-African (so-called black) men as a manual labour intensive legacy of the apartheid-era. Of these men, the majority had been with the factory for many years, some up to thirty-five years. Staff had seen many MDs come and go, and had witnessed and experienced many stories and effects.

*I wondered how such a work force could truly be seen, understood, appreciated, and honoured? Why should the staff trust me? Would they not see me as just another male European MD with the same values and management style as previous MDs? Considering the circumstances described in Chapter 3 and the uncertainty of the future, why would anyone choose to follow my leadership? My heart was crying for the injustices that had been perpetrated by previous management regimes and I was committed that my management style would be ethical and caring. I was committed to support workplace transformation in the interest of all of the factory's staff.*

My not-knowing question in all the staff meetings was: What did staff need from me as the MD? Many questions were asked about the factory's future and fears expressed of job losses. Many people voiced a lack of trust and communication as of utmost concern and staff requested regular meetings to address these concerns. Staff explained that with regular meetings, they could check whether my communication with managers had indeed reached the staff, and that the staff's communications had in turn reached me. In response to questions and discussions of the staff meetings, my understanding of the MD's role was offered in my first staff communication, discussed in Chapter 5.

If the factory staff were going to accept me as the new MD, it had to be on acceptable terms to them. The meetings were a start of hearing those terms, and staff members were witnessing (Chapter 2) our understanding and agreement to those terms.

Vincent commented that workers were never consulted at the factory. From this statement I deducted that management had not valued staff's perspectives, opinions, experience and wisdom. I therefore felt that there was scepticism towards management, and as such there could be scepticism towards me. I believed we could build trust between us, but realised that my relationship with staff members was departing from a low trust base. Staff members told me in no uncertain terms that we would all see about trust as time went on. In turn, staff members were invited to see for themselves how my management style would work and who I was. Their feedback of their experience of my management would always be welcomed as to ensure that my efforts would always support the factory. Such feedback could support the ethical self-reflection (Chapter 2) of a manager.

*Caring for the need of effective communication became the inspiration for a large open meeting with all staff present – a family indaba. There is a cultural richness in South Africa where business is increasingly drawing from, for example the community indaba. Indaba is the Zulu word for a meeting where current and future actions are debated (Roux & Steyn 2002:162). The possibility of an indaba was discussed with the management team (as discussed in Paragraph 4.3.3).*

Due to the need for interpreters, it was evident that many of the staff members could only understand afro-African languages. Enquiries indicated that the need for training in English was just the tips of the hippo's ears (African version for 'tip of the iceberg') of neglected staff development. Staff development became a main theme in the family's practice of care as well as our first management appointment, as discussed in Paragraph 4.3.1).

In the meetings staff members mentioned that they knew their jobs very well – the factory just needed increased sales and then the future would be all right for everyone. Comments such as these seemed like golden kernels and gave me hope around which we could co-construct alternative stories (Chapter 2).

#### **4.3. Manage by doing trust**

*Due to the severity of the crisis at the factory and my attention required in so many different areas at the same time, the two hats of ethical care and capitalism (Chapter 3) competed for priority! If I was to give in to panic, I would so easily don the hat of capitalism. Typically under that hat of scientific knowing and power, I would climb in, and over people, to fix issues. That route would have been a prescriptive management style. It appears to be a fast style of getting things done (Reynolds 1997:6) and many managers would defend this style, in 'old speak' as 'when the bush burns, fight the fires, we will care about care if we survive'. In fact, 'fires' were burning in many places and the factory's management team had been fighting fires for many years (George).*

*I chose to remain committed to my ethical care hat and approach to practice care and manage **with** people. This style required trust. There were risks and mistakes could be made, but I held the belief that mistakes from caring efforts are invaluable lessons for all. George recalled that although I involved myself, I let 'everyone get on with their jobs'.*

*An ethical caring management style also required patience as people needed time to discover insights, to develop awareness and empowerment. Time was needed to discover and practice new ways of being and doing. In this regard, Cas recalled a time of more group discussions at the factory and sometimes, to some people's frustration, our bigger and longer management meetings.*

*I believed that under the ethical care hat, people could become aware and empowered (Chapter 2). With awareness and empowerment we could co-transform the workplace (Chapter 2) with co-constructed unique outcomes, and thereby reach a sustainable profitability solution.*

#### **4.3.1 Our first and only ‘management’ appointment – a human potential manager**

Shortly after starting at the factory, Prudence, an afro-African human resources practitioner, was introduced to us. Over the last few years, the factory had been receiving little support in staff care and administration service from the human resource department of a sister factory. We desperately needed an able and aware manager to help us focus on care of our family. I experienced Prudence’s introduction as spiritual grace!

Contrary to typical MD power to hire and fire, I initiated a dialogue with head office and the management team about the appointment. The management team used their empowerment to co-select Prudence and she was appointed on a contract as human potential manager. Julie believed that her appointment was the right idea and that she was the right type of person. The family wanted to develop themselves and the appointment was in the interest of awareness and empowerment. The human potential manager would be dedicated to support the development of our people’s potential, in their own interests.

The appointment title was not just new jargon. There was an intentional departure from the exploitative history embodied in the title of human resources manager. In terms of human resources, David Epston considered how ‘resource’ evoked thoughts of mining (Freedman & Combs 1996:17). Resource to Epston seemed ‘like a fixed thing inside of someone that you had to go in and get’. From a social constructionist perspective (Chapter 2), the role of human resource management has become constituted in business as another manner to help ‘mine’ human beings as one of the company’s many ‘resources’. The history of workplace injustice, trauma and retrenchments show how human resources are at business’ beck and call. In contrast, our family was invited to freely contribute to the workplace from their desires and care.

‘Human’ and ‘manager’ were retained in the appointment title not to alarm head office that an irresponsible departure had been made from the management norm.

I believe 'care facilitator' as title would have been more descriptive of Prudence's role as human potential manager.

Prudence's appointment was also an answer, at least to my prayers, for the management team to become more gender and race representative in relation to South Africa's demography. She became the second woman in our management team, and also the team's only afro-African member. Her presence in the management team contributed to the team's understanding and experience of workplace culture diversity and community plurality (Chapter 2).

*In Prudence, I found another person who shared language, understanding, ethics and resistance to workplace injustices. Prudence and I shared some communality due to her exposure to apartheid, patriarchal power and gender discrimination and my prophetic commitment to resisting injustices of all kinds. Over time, we developed a mutually caring relationship that supported us both through very difficult times. Prudence recalled afterwards that she 'experienced tremendous respect from an euro-African broer' [Afrikaans for brother]. We became reflecting partners on humanness issues, ethics, issues of afro-African and euro-African culture and workplace transformation.*

*The relationship with Prudence convinced me of the importance and benefits for an MD or Chief Executive Officer to have a partner, able to reflect ethical care. The selection and role of such a reflecting partner needs careful consideration and is discussed in Chapter 6.*

In a short time, head office reneged on Prudence's appointment terms and wanted us to take the traditional human resource functions over from the sister factory. Prudence recalled that I refused to allow this change of role.

*It took courage to resist head office, as the opposition of power in business can be a risky undertaking. On reflection, this courage to resist reminded me of prophetic courage; facing resistance whilst practicing*

*change through the use of structures and power (as discussed in Chapter 2).*

Staff appreciated the appointment; Grace singled out the 'appointment of a black manager' as one of the most important events in the *family's* history. Julie believed that Prudence had good interaction and counselling with staff. Very quickly staff started to meet Prudence and more stories of the past surfaced. By means of her approach the management team became aware of the importance of care.

Prudence was not supposed to be replacing the other managers' care functions, a lesson to bear in mind for in-house counsellors: 'We are asking everyone not to change the normal management channels. Prudence needs to hear and communicate through the managers so that everyone can know what to change and what to do' (Prinsloo 2001a). Members of the management team consulted her and she could coach many of us on cultural and justice issues. Not intended, but in hindsight not surprising, Prudence played an important role as counsellor to the *family*.

#### ***4.3.2 Theta! Bua! (speak/speak up) – supporting communication with the MD's letters***

The first staff meetings increased awareness of concerns with the flow of communication to and from the MD and all levels of staff. Other than the various other initiatives to improve communications, I wanted to start regular and direct MD's communication to support staff with the transformation process. An idea was formulated to write to the *family*, as we were too busy and dispersed to have regular meetings with everyone present.

The idea of writing to the *family* was adopted from the practice of letter writing in narrative therapy to extend conversations (Epston 1998:95). In this manner we could have words that wouldn't fade or become lost amongst all the other priorities of running a business. Through the MD's communication the *family* could witness

events and practices and have means of remembering important issues. Such writing would mean a departure from typical brief and cold style MD memos, prevalent in many businesses. In the spirit of inclusive community (Chapter 2) the names for announcements were borrowed from the Xhosa culture as the name of the MD's communication.

Our *Theta! Bua!* was not issued from the hierarchical 'above,' but as a dialogue extended as personally as possible; inserted into pay packets, faxed or e-mailed to remote staff as well as posted on notice boards. The approach and content of the communications were co-constructed based on the epistemology of contextual theology and social constructionism (Chapter 2). Drafts were circulated within the management team and colleagues coached me on issues such as cultural inclusivity, respect and management. Extracts from various issues of *Theta! Bua!* are shown as examples of how the epistemology helped to shape the contents and style:

Personal – Yebo Brothers and Sisters, I see you! Thank you for welcoming me and allowing me to learn from you.

Sincere – I am talking from my heart.

Ethically sensitive – Can I please ask you to accept this manner of communication, so that I can reach everyone? If you have any better suggestion for communication, please tell me.

Invite reflection and dialogue – The factory has been through difficult times and the economy is tough – but I see that you are survivors! How have you been able to remain so strong?

Support our transformation efforts – 'Who are the workers? Can the family please talk on how we can even faster become Simunye [we are one], discussed in Chapter 5?)'

Nurture workplace culture – The purpose of the factory is to make profit. With *Simunye* we can be a strong family! Can we please ask everyone to help with ideas on how to become *Simunye*? Thank you for the family who said that they wanted the machine fixed so that they could work and we could make product. Now, the management team would like to say thank you too.

Fostering communication – In the last week, two messages came to me from the family – saying thank you for the changes that are starting to happen!

Promote care – How can we care for each other? Not just talk about it, but also take action! It is with heavy hearts that we remember two big trees that have died. We remember William and Andries – we say to their souls *hambani kahle!* We are sorry that all of us could not go to the funerals; could we maybe have a memorial service here at the factory?

Extend to social transformation – Could I please ask you to think how wonderful it could be without crime, here at *our* work, in *our* communities and in *our* beloved country?

Alternative stories in production – We also say thank you for how we can see *our* ‘baby products’ are made in the factory.

Externalising problems – When we have crime inside *our* work, it goes against *our* whole family and it prevents us from being profitable and to survive as a business.

Awareness and feedback – I have also spoken with many people and I am proud of everyone – I do not see anyone trying to break me! Even, if someone would like to try – they would be wasting the whole family’s time.

Over time, communication improved at the factory, ‘reaching all levels’ (Bokkie). An important aspect of *our* communication was that it was open and invited dialogue. Approximately six months after *Theta! Bua!* was launched, head office challenged all its business units to design and implement communications systems that would do what we had already been doing. We never learnt if head office had borrowed from *our* initiatives.

In hindsight, *Theta! Bua!* could have been more. The communications were often written after events and in reaction to trends and incidents. If someone, like a counsellor, could have focused on the writing, it could have been written even more in a narrative paradigm that could have done more to support care, ethics and workplace culture. Managers could use this extension of their voices to recognise individuals, comment on progress and record major events, such as the results of staff *indabas*. With the help of database information technology, the

MD's letter could be addressed to each staff member personally and thereby invite personal dialogue and witnessing.

#### **4.3.3 Our family *Indabas***

As discussed in Paragraph 4.2.2, the idea of a family *indaba* was inspired from listening to factory staff's need for improved communication. The *Theta! Bu!* (Prinsloo 2001a) invited the family to the first full staff *indaba* in the factory's sixty year history:

I have heard that I must be sure that my communications reach everyone correctly. And that communications reach me correctly. We have therefore thought that a staff *indaba* could help with communication. We are inviting all factory workers to our first *indaba* and lunch.

Lessem and Nussbaum (1996:211,214) consider face-to-face interpersonal communication integral to the African world of community and humanity. Mike Boon, founder of Group Africa, is quoted (:214); 'Communication in Africa involves face-to-face communication and should preferably be in large groups.' By means of a large face-to-face *indaba*, we could honour our African roots, improve communication and support increased awareness in growing as a workplace community. The *indaba* afforded us opportunities of witnessing discussions firsthand so that everyone present would know how the *indaba* worked for the common good. Importantly, it offered the opportunity for previously unheard voices to be heard.

Our *indaba* would put to practice our openness and honesty and was received with appreciation. Soweto remembered this event as 'a different thing coming from a white man who make people to talk'. The *indaba* afforded interaction with all levels of employees, and we had 'much more open and straight discussions' (Cas). Vincent thought that the *indaba* combined workers and managers, which was new to the manual labour workers. The *indaba* process illustrated aspects of

culture brokering inherent in the prophetic leadership role, as discussed in Chapter 2.

The first *indaba* commenced with an MD's briefing. Later, as requests for inclusive spirituality (Chapter 2) became heard, our *indaba* opened with prayer by one of the older afro-African men. Staff members were surprised with the level of openness and honesty in the MD's briefing. Belina recalled that the *indaba* 'gave information about how the business was doing and even asking for employees ideas'.

Similarly to the original afro-African spirit of *indaba*, where all members of a particular community would debate a community's fate with equal say, the family had opportunity to ask questions and debate issues. *Indabas* traditionally run independent of the Western notion of time. They are so important that their participants are not concerned how long it takes to speak, or how long it takes to settle issues, as long as all members are satisfied by the outcome. Unfortunately, due to production pressures, we never had the time to debate all the issues of importance. However, much debating took place and much time was used, so much so that some euro-African staff became impatient, even sometimes bored. In the *indabas*, afro-African staff experienced liberation and empowerment in being able to discuss issues in an open forum and in empowering ways.

Award ceremonies at the *indabas* were held as rituals of celebration. A committee was tasked to collect stories of care in order to present the family's appreciation at *indabas*. At these ceremonies family members received long service awards, and recognition for actions of care in the family. White and Epston (1990:191) believe that awards often signal a person's new status in a community. Morgan (2000:111) argues that 'rituals and celebrations mark significant steps in the journey away from a problem story to a new and preferred version of life'.

Considering the above arguments, I believe we were celebrating successes in our alternative stories and that the family was witnessing the joy (Chapter 2) thereof. An award that remains in memory is Dundula's [name changed for confidentiality] recognition for caring about the damage forklift vehicles were causing to the

product. He suggested that forklift drivers have regular eye tests as he realised that forklift accidents may have been caused by eyesight problems, rather than negligence.

Communal lunch concluded the *indabas* as a way of being with each other as people and witnessing the joy of our humanness as a workplace community. A family member was part of a dance group, *Umgqozi Nengane Zakhe*, and the group's offer to entertain us resulted in inviting the family to join in dancing. Mbigi (2000), Lessem and Nussbaum (1996:212) and Impey and Nussbaum (1996:227-248) argue for the importance of dancing in the workplace as a vehicle for team building and to build company solidarity.

The family lunches offered opportunities for the prophetic role of culture broker (Chapter 2) between the afro-African and euro-African family members. Euro-African comments in this regard reflected that it was one thing being united as a working family, while it was another to socialise at lunch, not even to think of dancing together. Whilst socialising over lunch, I spoke privately with different people about ways of reaching out towards each other's cultures. In many instances my behaviour of relating to all cultural groupings with equal interest was all I could do. I maintained my belief that time would help us heal the wounds of the past and that our co-created alternative stories would help us to become a more authentic community (Chapter 2) as a family.

#### **4.3.4 Trust in the workplace needs ethics**

Barrett (1998:147) comments on the relationship between trust and ethics in workplace culture and community (Chapter 2):

For trust to blossom and flourish, there must be shared values and mutual accountability, nurtured by cooperation and friendship. Above all, there must be a strong sense of working together for the good of the whole. Therefore, to grow trust, an organisation must first grow community.

We did not consciously decide to promote trust in the family. The principle of family as a workplace community embodied trust, and is discussed in context of transformation in Chapter 5. In retrospect, it appears as if we all wanted trust and instinctively promoted it.

The theme of trust became visible from the events and experiences, some discussed in the previous sections. How did the family develop trust? Grace's voice as given in the dominant story (Chapter 3), comes to mind here. She believed there was no trust between employees and the factory management. The lack of trust extended to no working relationship between the workers and management (Soweto).

*From stories and through staff interaction, I heard that there was trust in the family, although abused, neglected and not witnessed. In my heart, I held onto a belief in an alternative story – I believed that trust could be returned, if it was done with integrity. Freddy expressed it as trust begets trust when empowerment was highlighted and implemented and human barriers removed. Trust developed in the family as an alternative factory story, in resistance to the dominating story of workplace culture (Chapter 2). I wanted to take the risk of trusting people.*

Barrett (1998:144) believes that a culture of trust is created when a community lives their shared values. As discussed previously, trust also develops when people see that the risks they take not to abuse each other's vulnerability are safe. Our family as community started to live our values of respect, care, openness and honesty. Our workplace culture slowly but surely became more trustful as we lived our values and saw that we were working hard not to let one another down.

To my mind, the leadership of an organisation can decide whether they want a workplace culture of trust. Such a decision would not create trust, but would form a commitment of approach towards the transformation of workplace culture. Given previous management's part in the trauma of the factory's workplace culture, I believed it was up to the current management team to take the first steps of trust

by starting to *do* and *live* trust. These steps of trust required managers' own journeys of transformation with alternative stories, discussed under transformation in Chapter 5.

The factory's management team was invited to *do* sincere care and trust (Prinsloo 2001d):

Our every move, behaviour and language is being watched – are we walking our talk? Imagine what people could be thinking – is this just a new way of pretending to be different in order to just milk more results (albeit in a different way)? Or maybe, lets wait and see if this is sincere, because the truth will show after time (when the pretend can't be kept up). The family have been abused as people. Trust and respect will come, if we truly change, and walk our talk.

Trust is a knowing between people that they will not let each other down (Rossouw & Bews 2002:148). The invitation to the management team to *do* trust meant practicing trust leadership as personal ethics (Chapter 2) and ways of being. For managers to 'walk our talk' of trust meant openness, honesty, respect and delivering on our promises. Taking action on supporting care and communication in the family showed that the management team were making good on promises.

Briefing the family at our *indabas* on how the company was doing was practicing openness and honesty. Reynolds (1997:65) believes that telling the score is imperative, as 'secrecy and deviousness are anathema to trust'. Grace was amazed about all staff being 'let in' on the factory's financial position; 'tell us how was the business doing'. Research participants remembered trust in different ways:

Soweto: We learnt about transparency from them [the managers].

Vincent: People changed much because they have trust in you.

Prudence believed trust was promoted by a leadership style of openness.

Cas saw a leadership style that was 'much more open with straight discussions'.

Belina believed the family became bound together with love, trust and care.

Bokkie saw actions and efforts to build trust at all levels.

Rob believed: 'Kobus was open and discussed his hopes and fears in meetings, what head office was saying, what he was reading between the lines what head office might do. He practiced what he preached.'

Laura Nash (1993:26,27) comments on personal morality and business ethics in the context of trust and mutual respect:

If an employee does not trust that top management cares about him (or her), it is unlikely that he or she will care to deal meticulously on behalf of that management. Moving beyond the ethics of trust on which managerial activities depend, it can be seen that managers also make decisions that engender moral outcomes.

Rossouw and Bews (2002:147) believe that trust is a condition for teamwork and that it can be fostered by ethics (:153). To honour trust, parties need to consider each other's interests. As discussed in Chapter 2, considerations for *an other's* interests constitute ethical awareness and behaviour. Factors such as openness, competence, integrity (consistency, reliability, fairness), benevolence and a history of interaction are considered to support managers to be trustworthy (:153,154).

Trust became part of the family's alternative story. In hindsight, I believe we could have done more work to foster mutual trust in the family, especially with the middle management group, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Trust supported our care and in turn was nurtured by care. Trust in the higher purpose of our alternative stories supported us to continue with courage in the face of the factory's possible closure.

#### **4.4. Participatory ethical care at the factory**

As argued in Chapter 2, pastoral care inspires participatory ethical care in the workplace. Workplace care, practiced as our alternative story, was based in trust, ethics, awareness and empowerment. In the factory's dominant story (Chapter 3) there was 'no care between management and employees' (Rob). In resistance to the dominant story, Belina remembered care in the alternative story:

*Employees started to care for the factory they were working for. They started to love each other and care about each other. The factory's employees started to work as a family, both black and whites, top to bottom.*

*I recalled the surprised looks the first time I dared to invite discussion on care with the factory's management team. One of my questions to the team was: how we could expect the family to care about our business and our products if the family did not properly care for each other? Members responded that there was care in the family and felt that I was jumping to conclusions. The sick bay was cited to represent care and managers told how they responded to people asking for help with health and financial loans.*

*I wondered if anyone dared to wonder if the family were really cared for? Did anybody wonder if care was missed by the unheard or unseen (Chapter 2)? Did anybody have any awareness that there could be unheard and unseen injustice, pain or trauma? In ethical self-reflection I wondered if my epistemology of care had not given me an 'expert view' of care, albeit committed to ethics and the post-modern paradigm? Did my view of care prevent me from acknowledging that care was adequate at the factory?*

*However, the more I got to understand the factory's dominant story, the more I believed that care not only had to improve drastically, it had to transform to an alternative story. I believed care had to move away from been dispensed by people in power to unempowered, victimised people, when they saw fit to do so. To my mind, participatory ethical care was an appropriate approach*

*and aligned with prophetic commitment. I felt prophetically moved to introduce that outside perspective from within.*

*From my approach to the consulting assignment (Chapter 3), I decided to live and do care as a way of being, and as practice (Chapter 2). My care would focus equally on our family, our workplace culture and our products. I hoped that my actions would increase the family's awareness, that the benefits of care would inspire them and their empowerment would grow so that they would do care with each other.*

*I chose to wear the hat of care, rather than the hat of capitalism (Chapter 3). Prudence mentioned afterwards that people seemed to be the most important priority in my life.*

In the case of care at the factory, actions proved to be stronger than words. The appointment of Prudence as human potential manager was an action motivated by care for the well-being of our family. Although we had an experienced human resources practitioner dedicated to the development of the family, embracing participatory ethical care was a journey of awareness and education for all of us.

Prudence remembered her journey of awareness of participatory ethical care:

For the first time in my six years as an HR practitioner, I worked in an environment of an open door policy. For the first time I was taught to *practice* and not *talk* care. A lot had changed in my life; I practiced care and my role as HR practitioner went to another level.

#### **4.4.1 Care with our people**

The management team started doing care differently by thinking differently about our people. During a re-assessment of management focuses, 'our people' became the team's first priority among the other fifteen critical management issues (see Addendum B). This meant that we formally thought of, and discussed our family first at every management meeting, irrespective of other pressing business.

This commitment to our family was communicated externally to head office as the priority item in our weekly factory status report. Freddy recalled:

People became the focus before the business; this made sense since at the end of the day, it was going to be people who would achieve the results (financially and other).

Management focus for the business aside, care was accepted as a management responsibility until the family became aware and empowered to practice mutual care and self-care. Care with people included their personal well-being and challenges at the workplace; ‘practicing sincere interest in people when they were under performing, performing or when they had personal problems’ (Bokkie).

In ethical reflection and remembering the factory’s dominant story (Chapter 3), I reminded my colleagues in the management team to consider how factory staff would trust that care efforts were not just new ways of exploiting them (Prinsloo 2001d). Managers were supported to reflect ethically in whatever activity and decisions they were involved in when it concerned people. Managers were encouraged to practice awareness for the unheard and unseen issues and people in need of care.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Caring with sick people***

Prudence and Julie, the factory’s production manager, supported many sick family members on a regular basis. Members of our family had been sick over extended periods and could not work anymore, yet head office would not support alternative ways of care (Julie 2001). In Julie and Prudence we had women managers as care-givers (Chapter 2). Their feedback contributed to the management team’s awareness of the challenges facing the family due to unacceptable care.

Julie and Prudence asked me to join their community of care (Paragraph 4.4.1.2) with William [name changed for confidentiality], one of our chronically ill family members. William showed me his wounds, the severity of which I had never seen, even as a trained paramedic. He had been in excruciating pain for more than two years; he could barely walk, yet came to work as much as he could. The head office sickbay had given up on supporting him, and amidst the priorities of business, the official care-givers generally hoped he and the problem would just go away, meaning die.

Over the two years William and his problem became unheard and unseen. From Weingarten's arguments on witnessing (Chapter 2) William's problems might have become unheard and unseen, yet they were witnessed by the family and by the workplace culture. I agree with Weingarten that the witnessing of William's problems had affected the family, whether they knew it or not. The lack of care for William became symbolic for the lack of care for the family. The social construction of that dominant story became so much of a reality that neither the management team (initially), nor head office understood why I started to resist the lack of care so strongly.

Under severe time constraints and amidst the other priorities of business, Prudence and Julie started to personally engage with William's problem, and to support William. We believed our own care systems should be mobilised first. I tried to invite the site's sick bay sister, the site's consulting doctor and the human resources manager at head office into our community of care. When progress was unsatisfactory with the company medical service, an action of constructive resistance was embarked on – help would be sought elsewhere, but help we would get.

Prudence supported William by accompanying him to a non-company doctor and to a state hospital. Prudence and William also met a consulting specialist to ensure that he was receiving the best treatment. This personal support affected William's attitude towards the problem and with his growing empowerment he joined the care team with renewed courage and hope.

William's courage in turn inspired me regarding my own problems. Whenever we saw each other, he would give me a friendly wave or smile, although still in pain. I supported the care team in turn through encouragement and telephonic conversations with the consulting specialist, always resisting any notion of William being just one of thousands of other people in our country in need of care. Personal support was maintained until William indicated that he was satisfied.

The results of William's care affected the family in profound ways. The family saw care being practiced and not talked about. Many afro-African staff came to new insights of the care that euro-African managers had for our family. Some people felt that human dignity was restored. Our workplace culture witnessed success, joy and resistance to injustice. We experienced and increased awareness and empowerment of what could be done with care – the *family* started to do care in new and empowered ways. In particular, our family did not accept unsatisfactory care. This increased awareness and empowerment contributed to the *family's* co-transformation towards alternative stories.

Head office unfortunately failed to adopt the above experience as inspiration to improve their practice of care. I believe in the way witnessing works (Chapter 2), that many other people who witnessed the experience of our commitment to care were affected, whether they knew it or not. To my mind people saw that better care could be achieved.

#### **4.4.1.2 *Our communities of care***

Morgan (2000:115-117) argues that members to communities of care have experience of problems and hard-won insider knowledges of beating problems. Communities of care could support and take action *with* the family against externalised problems by offering experience and more people to share workloads. The story of William (Paragraph 4.4.1.1) demonstrated how a community of care could beat a problem, and at the same time support the caregivers.

The family formed other communities of care that supported each other and the factory. These communities were often not physically visible, but the family witnessed their care and voices (Chapter 2). A story of witnessing and voice happened during the breakdown of the factory's prime production machine. On the third day of not operating a delegation of non-management production staff requested a meeting with me.

The delegation quickly determined that I had not known of the breakdown. The technical and production managers had not informed me of the situation and as I had not been walking around as usual, I had not seen the breakdown. The delegation's concern was that they did not see or hear me caring for the situation. They cared for lost production and they voiced a family need to make product.

Another level of care became evident in discussion with the delegation. There was growing belief amongst non-managers that the euro-African middle management team was sabotaging our transformation efforts (Chapter 5). This was the first time that I became aware of this particular perception and wondered about various discourses (Chapter 2) behind such a perception. Thanks to our growing workplace culture of care, trust and open communication, I became aware of a potential problem.

In my commitment to alternative stories I investigated the situation from a not-knowing perspective, honoured the care and reported back publicly in the *Theta! Bua!* (Prinsloo 2001b):

I heard the machine is now fixed. Thank you to the family who told me about the problems and your concerns that maybe someone is trying to break me. I have looked for myself and saw the problems - the machine had a very difficult breakdown. Thank you to everyone that worked so hard to fix the machine. Thank you to the family who said that they want the machine fixed so that they can work and we can

make product! I have also spoken to many people and I am proud of everyone – I do not see anyone trying to break me! Even, if someone would like to try – they would be wasting the whole family's time.

*In retrospect, I believe the failure to co-create a community of care was attributable to my lack of literature awareness, lack of experience and being too busy with the other priorities of transforming and saving a business. I regret not calling for help from my transformation facilitator colleagues. I believe a manager is too business-focused to effectively remember, have the reflective time and distance away from day-to-day affairs to be the transformation facilitator as well. Hopefully other managers would reflect on this experience and invite the services of transformation facilitators.*

On numerous occasions we needed head office support for their power, influence and resources and invited head office to join us in communities of care. Particular instances are remembered:

In terms of social responsibility, the assistance of the police investigation into the murder of our colleague Andries was requested to ensure that justice was served. Head office responded that they did not believe they could help and thereby just closed the issue. We believed differently and Prudence was asked to liaise regularly with the police and later with the prosecutor to prevent the case from being swept under the rug.

At the time of Petrus' death head office responded: 'Nothing else you need to do at the moment - perhaps send flowers to the family' (Smack 2001 [name changed for confidentiality]).

With William's illness, head office did not support our care efforts. Neither did they improve the site's sick bay service levels.

*I believe head office's failure to join our communities of care was partly due to head office not caring for the factory, partly because they did not understand or practice participatory ethical care (Chapter 2), and partly because I did not inform head office.*

*The failure to inform head office was due to not having the literature and experience awareness that I have developed through the study. I also believe that I lacked the time and distance away from the business to remember the dynamics and importance of such communication with head office.*

*To my mind, a 'participating care facilitator' could play an invaluable role in a pressurised business environment to support the above functions and actions (discussed in Chapter 5).*

#### **4.4.1.3 We are family in death**

During my time at the factory, five members of the family passed away. Due to the factory's location and staff coming from afar, funerals were being held far from the factory, for example in Transkei, Cape Town and Lesotho. By not recognising the need for care of the unseen and unheard (Chapter 2) and continuing the old habits, management members did not attend funerals of people of other races. The management team would usually send a note of condolence with a wreath. In Cape Town, the regional manager attended the funeral of a staff member there. The factory contributed to the rental of minibus taxis for members of the family that attended the funerals as a group.

*With the death of Petrus, a family member who had been with the factory for thirty-five years, something changed in me about our family's funerals. My recollection after this change was that prophetic spiritual guidance (Chapter 2) asked of me to care for the unheard and unseen. Petrus' family granted my request to attend his funeral. The attendance of that funeral changed my life and love for care. At the funeral, Petrus' widow introduced their children to me. The introduction offered me*

*insights into the plight of young Southern African men; one was working hard to complete his schooling and the others desperately needed employment.*

*I saw that Petrus had supported a whole community and wondered if head office ever understood the devastating effects of wage earners' deaths or of retrenching people. The story of Petrus humbled me. He was a man that worked at a place more than 400km from his home and saw his family at most, five times a year. At the factory he lived in sparse quarters in a hostel, a far cry from the space and tranquillity of his beloved Lesotho mountains.*

*Apparently, Petrus' employers never thought him more than a labourer, yet he had remained dedicated to the factory for all of his working life, not even considering the hard times of apartheid. I was at loss how I could honour Petrus; to say thank you and apologise for the past. In retrospect I regret not having offered to honour him at the funeral, but did not want to impose on the proceedings. It is hoped that remembering this story and study will honour Petrus' legacy to teach and inspire managers for many years to come.*

The family remembered my attendance at the funeral:

*Wahamba nathi ukuya eLesotho ngesikathi sishiywe omunye wabasebenzi wafika epehetha isiphekiso semvu emndenini kamufi. [He went with us to Lesotho to bury one of our fellow workers; he came with a sheep for the family of the deceased] (Soweto's translation). Vincent considered me the first and last MD to attend the funeral of a worker, as far as Lesotho. 'It was history in the making, nobody will ever do it again' (Soweto).*

#### **4.4.2 Care with our products**

The factory's products had lost its market leadership and major market share and to my mind people and attitudes at the factory supported the product's dominant story (Chapter 3). If the factory was going to be restored to profitability, then we urgently had to find alternative stories for our products.

A circular relationship between care and trust was already in place from where the alternative product story developed. Sales staff would sell with more effort if they could trust the quality of the products again. Production staff had made quality products in the past, and could do so again if they could trust that sales staff cared for the family.

By inviting witness' and participants' voices (Chapter 2) we re-discovered many features and qualities of our products that had been buried by the dominant stories. It transpired that clients trusted our products for their strength and longevity, products sometimes worked for more than forty years. We searched for a metaphor for our product that would acknowledge both its vulnerability during manufacture and also its strength when installed. The family adopted the metaphor of *amadoda*, meaning 'strong men' in the Zulu language. The metaphor was in turn adopted by our marketing message as product longevity that would serve our client's children's children.

Production teams were invited to make the *amadoda* product, but were also requested not to make *tsotsi* products. *Tsotsi* is the afro-African metaphor for 'thief' and was used for a low quality product that would rob the family of profits and rob our clients of service. George remembered that the mood in the manufacturing plant changed to the positive. The family thanked the production teams for the caring way in which they produced and the stockyard teams for the gentle way in which they handled 'our baby products' (Prinsloo 2001b).

With innovative work-around plans and by diverting funds from other areas in the factory, the production team succeeded in manufacturing samples of product without using the carcinogenic raw material (Chapter 3). This was the first time in

the factory's history that such production had been achieved and we were excited and inspired that this offered a major product rejuvenation opportunity. Regrettably head office did not share our belief and refused funding to pursue the product innovation. Some managers interpreted that refusal as an indication of head office's hidden agenda to close the factory.

Production teams were invited to product installation site visits for the first time in the factory's history. On these site visits, *tsotsi* product failures could be viewed first-hand. Positive effects of *amadoda* products on the communities that they served could also be witnessed first-hand. Cas remembered that the workplace spirit of the production teams was different after those site visits. Our production teams had a feeling of belonging and had found new meaning in their behind-the-scenes efforts.

The quality of product improved steadily during my consulting term, reaching the lowest product reject statistics in the month before head office closed down the factory. The alternative product stories also produced new language in social construction (Chapter 2). The family in general started to talk about 'caring for our baby products'. In the manufacturing plant, in the stockyard and on installation sites some family members would be seen or heard expressing care in handling of the product and how well it would serve the clients.

#### **4.4.3 Doing care with safety**

The factory had a very good safety record, although a previous MD had abolished the formal National Occupation and Safety Association (NOSA) safety standards seven years previously. In South Africa, NOSA signboards are familiar on industrial sites, displaying a site's safety grading by the number of green stars awarded. The stars, five being the highest award, reflect accident free statistics and adherence to safety regulations ranging from protective clothing to operation of plant and machinery.

*To my mind, the family's maintenance of a high safety record, in the absence of a NOSA grading, was an alternative story of care,*

*responsibility and trust. The family had been proving that by caring for safety, safety cared for them.*

*I believed various aspects of safety could be improved at the factory, but in particular, I believed it appropriate that the family received both NOSA and head office recognition for doing care with safety. Amidst all the other pressures, the family undertook the challenge to re-establish its NOSA standards, and achieve at least a four star grading at the outset.*

The interrelatedness of care, responsibility and trust becomes visible in practicing safety. For example: how did people in the factory trust that a crane driver would not drop a lethal load onto them? How did the crane driver's commitment to care, motivate him to be more responsible in his job? Barrett (1998:147) argues that mutual accountability supports the growth of trust. To my mind, family members were called to practice responsibility and accountability for each other's safety in their practice of care with each other. Such responsibility was not the exception, but rather inherent in our workplace culture, akin to Sevenhuijsen's concept of 'caring solidarity' as part of human existence (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7).

After three months' hard work and an extensive audit, the family was recommended for a NOSA four-star safety grading on October 29, 2001. The safety assessor believed that the family was worthy of a five-star grading, but that was unfortunately prevented by technicalities with record keeping. Head office considered the achievement 'a magnificent effort, knowing how difficult and what hard work it is in achieving this' (Smeed 2001).

The family's commitment to do care *with* safety, continued even after the factory's closure. Bokkie reported that the nineteen remaining family members, tasked with finishing off the process, continued with safety inspections and their health and safety meetings.

## **4.5 Summary**

In this chapter, the study was positioned in the factory's alternative story and explored pastoral therapy and care practices in the context of particular themes. Exploration of the factory's alternative story continues in the next chapter in the context of pastoral therapy and care practices in workplace culture transformation.

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## **Chapter 5. Doing transformation**

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### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter continues the factory's alternative story discussion from Chapter 4 in the context of pastoral therapy and care practices within transformation. As argued from a social constructionist perspective (Chapter 2), workplace culture is ever evolving. Barrett (1998:14) considers such workplace evolution as continual transformation and change. The discussions in the previous chapter already told alternative stories of *lived transformation*. In the following discussion, *doing transformation* is discussed reflectively as *praxis* – a more deliberate, conscious social construction, than just lived-transformation.

### **5.2 Prophetic ethical pastoral leadership in transformation**

As discussed in Chapter 1, transformation requires leadership. Pastors, managers and pastoral therapists are in positions of leadership and power to support transformation. Transformation leadership can be supported by prophetic ethical pastoral leadership (as argued in Chapter 2), and requires awareness and vision of the transformation possibilities. Experience with our vision for transformation is discussed in Section 5.3 and this section reflects on some of our experience with transformation leadership.

In the first *Theta! Buai!*, ethical care moved me to invite reflection and dialogue with the family on my understanding of the MD's role (Prinsloo 2001a):

I am here to help make this a profitable company again. In my own thoughts and after various discussions, I understand my job as to:

Care for our people – we can become *Simunye!*

Ensure good communications – from me to everyone else, and back to me.

Lead and inspire the management team to ensure that we are improving.

Support all the efforts to have the best quality products in the market and for the communities.

Support all the efforts to develop new products that will give us a future, even if [carcinogenic raw material] is outlawed,

Join the sales teams with the fights for business in the markets.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If there are any changes or comments you want from my job, please tell me.

To my mind, although it has certain benefits, it is not ideal that the transformation leader is also the participating facilitator (Prinsloo & Colleagues 2001:6). The interplay, support and conflict of leadership and facilitation aspects are discussed in Chapter 6.

From a pastoral perspective, and in context of our workplace becoming a family, the leader as head of the family played an important role to guide and support others. Bokkie considered the leadership style as 'practicing Christianity in business'. Vincent lost his father in 1995, and did not feel the loss anymore as I was seen as the father of the family. Transformation leaders would be well cautioned to be weary of the power trap of charismatic, cult-like leadership power when workplace members vest appreciation, power and trust in them.

*As was the case with me at the factory, I believe a transformation leader could draw on all the prophetic aspects of transformation leadership (as discussed in Chapter 2). The power structures in the business world need courage to resist– whether these structures are above or below the transformation leader.*

As argued in Chapter 2, awareness and empowerment in transformation can be resisted for various reasons. At the factory, the predominantly euro-African male

middle management group represented considerable power. Between this group and their afro-African reportees there had been years of stress, discriminatory practices and power abuse, to name some. Over the years, few afro-African staff members were assisted to develop and to be appointed to the middle management group.

Soweto referred to the middle management group as 'far far right-wingers'. Apparently, the middle management group referred to me as 'the afro-African staff's manager'.

*From prior consulting experience I knew of the tendencies and risks of a management group being alienated from a company-wide process. The pattern is that facilitation usually happens with a specific layer of management with reliance on that group to pass messages and the transformation process on. On the one hand that is ideal as many people can develop and practice transformation leadership. On the other hand, it places a demand on untrained and inexperienced managers. As a management team we attempted to address this issue with the Simunye transformation charter, discussed in Section 5.4.*

To my mind, the transformation leader needs to hold the vision and belief in the transformation process, understanding that it is a challenging process and remembering that unique outcomes are pursued. Workplace culture transformation relies on personal transformation, which is at best difficult and challenging. The transformation leader needs to remember that to many people transformation is new, foreign and intimidating. In terms of personal transformation within the context of organisational transformation, Hey and Moore (1998:Front flap) quotes Mort Meyerson, chairman of Perot Systems:

The caterpillar doesn't know that he'll come out as a butterfly. All he knows is that he's alone, it's dark, and it's a little scary.

### **5.3 Vision for transformation**

*Although I had a belief in the potential of alternative stories of a just, caring and effective factory workplace, I tried to maintain a not-knowing and non-prescriptive position. Looking back, I recognise that I did have a vision for our factory, believing in and using concepts such as care, profitability, fairness and using metaphors such as family and Simunye.*

*My vision was not a clearly formulated pre-packaged concept; it was part of my being, as a prophetic vision and being under spiritual guidance (discussed in Chapter 2). Initially, I did not explain my vision, just lived it. I believed that our new workplace culture would be formed as a unique outcome without declaring a formal vision.*

*The factory experience and reflection in this study seem to indicate that deliberate transformation needs an agreed and informed vision by the participants of where the transformation could be leading. This indication seems to be more a need from euro-African managers and middle managers than from afro-African colleagues.*

*Members of the factory's management team requested me to formalise my vision and Julie believed that I should have communicated my intentions earlier in the consultation. These requests resulted in writing the Simunye transformation charter, discussed in Section 5.4.*

The use of metaphor can be most supportive in formulating and communicating transformation vision. Transformation participants can identify and align with the elements and characteristics in metaphors. The South African context is rich in cultural and nature metaphors, as Visser and Sunter (2002) illustrate in their call for business to transform from conquering lions (:31-45) to caring elephants (:47-121).

*Family became the metaphor for our workplace community, discussed in Section 5.6. The values and images represented in family invited the transformation participants*

emotionally and creatively to contribute to the vision or theme (Visser & Sunter 2002:26). Shared, formalised and written vision brings the workplace intention into communal focus. With a shared vision, workplace members can put their hearts and souls into work knowing that they and the organisation care about the same things (Barrett 1998:144).

Our first attempt to formulate *our* factory vision was in the Simunye transformation charter (Prinsloo & Colleagues 2001:3):

In the next two years, we want to become a happy, profitable, visionary, innovative, fair and caring business family that supplies quality [product] solutions through excellent service, to serve our clients' childrens' children.

#### **5.4 Simunye – charter for factory culture transformation**

After receiving requests from the family's management team, and in preparation for a presentation on our transformation efforts to head office, the transformation charter document was written. The charter was co-constructed in cycles of writing and reflection with the management and middle management teams, reaching a fourth draft. Regrettably, head office started with its closure process before the charter could reach maturity and be circulated to all the *family*.

The name *Simunye*, meaning 'we are one' was adopted as the name for our transformation process – affirming we are one business family. To our minds *simunye* was a practical extension to the concept of *ubuntu*, meaning: 'I am because we are – I can only be a person through others' (Mbigi 2000:6, Weingarten 2000:400). As discussed in Chapter 2, *ubuntu* is community focused and invites persons simultaneously as participants and witnesses.

The charter was written in my epistemology and language of that time, and was intended to support various aspects of our transformation process (Prinsloo & Colleagues 2001). If the charter were to be written after this study, it would have differed considerably by departing more clearly with approach, focus on participatory

ethical care, ethics, awareness, empowerment and coaching on alternative stories. Possibly the attempt to establish a document acceptable to different levels of literacy and to include all the issues of transformation was impractical and optimistic. An alternative way would have been to offer chapters of information on particular themes along the journey.

A copy of the charter is attached as Addendum D, and for ease of reference a short synopsis is offered:

The charter was intended to become a co-created document by inviting everyone in the family's input, as well as input from head office. As a priority, the charter would support and inform all in the family what was intended with the transformation journey.

In order to support alternative stories, as many positive and functional aspects we had in the family were offered for witnessing. It was hoped that the charter would support the management team in their support of the middle management team of promoting transformation among themselves and with other colleagues.

The use of new language, ideas, concepts and metaphors could be explained. Perceived risks and resistance to transformation could be discussed, for example, false promises, silent resistance, lacking vision, not communicating and declaring victory too soon. Initially the charter was also intended as minutes and a reminder by listing managerial actions for transformation, by delivery date and by person responsible for action.

Managers considered the *simunye* process positively. They believed the charter would support our efforts to formalise our understanding of the transformation as well as to communicate the transformation intentions. Freddy believed it would be difficult for some people to change and adapt, yet those that did would be better off doing so. Rob saw that there would be greater cultural understanding, which would result in higher quality product and improved customer service. Faan wanted to see more

business expectations in the document, especially as empowerment should also foster accountability. Cas wondered if transformation was really going to be effective, as he had been noting signs of old problems recurring.

Julie was concerned that the transformation process had commenced without a proper introduction and definition and that the middle management group was watching it as just another trick for harder work and more abuse. Bokkie commented that the charter represented a way of life in which he always believed, yet was prevented from living due to apartheid and abusive management practices. George believed the *simunye* concept had marked acceptance in the family, but that we needed time and education to get everyone to understand the new levels of freedom, empowerment and accountability. He believed the charter would support the general awareness of what *simunye* was about.

The presentation of *simunye* to head office was a low point in the family's history. The director of human resources considered our efforts three years ahead of the other sister companies. Ironically he was not interested to learn from our efforts, nor did he offer our experiences to other management teams. When Prudence and I left the meeting, we believed that the director and his department felt threatened by our initiatives, and we had a sinking feeling that strangely our progress was not what the head office wanted. We concluded that the head office was busy with a hidden agenda and we feared for the factory's future (discussed in Chapter 6).

## **5.5 Participant awareness and empowerment**

As argued in Chapter 2, workplace members need to move to positions of awareness and empowerment to support and sustain workplace transformation. Educated and experienced people could easily forget that many previously disadvantaged people in South Africa do not have the awareness of more just, ethical and caring workplaces. To my mind there is a similarity between unaware workplace members and unaware witnesses of trauma (Chapter 2).

The family's awareness and empowerment had been increasing with the transformation efforts. Once people could trust that stories would not be held against them, many stories of injustice and abuse were told. Through the telling of stories of the factory's old culture, awareness grew in the family. Awareness grew particularly when managers witnessed the trauma of the stories and acknowledged that injustices and trauma actually happened.

Empowerment was supported in participatory ethical care, trust and care in safety and delegation of duties by means of *simunye*, the *indabas*, open communication and development of people. Some managers found the awakening awareness and empowerment challenging, some embarrassing, particularly as the family's voice grew during the question and answer sessions at the *indabas*. Awareness and empowerment were not pursued as transformation goals; they seemed to have been fostered under our practice of participatory ethical care. Due to this study, my interest in awareness and empowerment grew.

*During the research meeting (Chapter 3) we, as a research group, also discussed ethics and workplace culture. In reflection on participant awareness at the factory, I wondered how the research participants' awareness of these concepts could be increased.*

The research participants were invited to witness a workplace incident by reading an article in *Homeless Talk* (February 2002:4), a community newspaper focusing on marginalised people:

Management of a neighbouring shop held a female assistant responsible for R400 that disappeared from a till and pressed her to return the money or face arrest and dismissal. One of the managers says they told the woman that they knew where she had hidden the money, but it was in her interest to return it herself so that she retains her job. She then led us to the next-door clothing shop and pulled out a bundle of banknotes out of the pocket of a jacket worn by a mannequin. The manager adds that he sympathised with the woman, who is

a single mother, but regrets breaking the promise of keeping her on, as he got her arrested and fired.

Once the research participants had read the article, they were invited to write their comments and impressions on what they thought and felt while reading the article. Thereafter we, as a research group, discussed power relations, ethics, justice, effects on workplace culture and the challenges of two hats. After the discussion, the research participants were again invited to write down their comments and impressions. The responses divided into managers and non-managers and before and after discussions, have been attached as Addendum C.

The research participants generally commented that their awareness of underlying discourses in the above incident had increased after the discussion. This comment seemed to be reflected in the increased use of words like ethics, trust, justice and workplace culture in the comments after discussion. To my mind, in terms of social construction (Chapter 2), use of new language reflected changed awareness.

*I realised that my awareness of other people's awareness had grown due to the research. In retrospect, I believe the above, or a similar process, would have supported the family's growing awareness.*

Empowerment in the family was a slow and challenging process. Empowerment challenges power, especially as those who have been in positions of privilege and power have to make room for others' empowerment. Trust and care, discussed in Chapter 4, offered ways of empowerment to grow and mature with the accompanying awareness and accountability invited by ethics. It was clear that empowerment was initially focused on getting work done to higher standards to help save the factory. Managers were challenged to step back to allow people the power to decide for themselves on work and standards. As discussed previously, this meant accepting mistakes, whilst remaining present and at hand to prevent catastrophic mistakes.

It was logical to understand that another level of empowerment would include expectations of promotions into positions of power. As all management positions had

already been filled, new appointments would mean growth or displacement of existing managers. Under the effects of the employment equity bill we had only briefly explored the possibilities of about three quarters of euro-African management and middle management team members that would be displaced. When questioned during an *indaba*, I committed that I would step from my position within two years in order for an afro-African manager to take over from me. At the *indaba* the family agreed that no management changes would happen unless a manager of acceptable awareness, empowerment and proficiency was available. The family also agreed that any displaced family member had to be cared for adequately and supported in their move onwards.

The factory was unfortunately closed before we could experience the family's empowerment in bloom.

## **5.6 *Family – being in authentic workplace community***

When did we start calling ourselves a *family*? What happened that we called ourselves a *family*? Answers to these questions vary, but seem to indicate the *family* recalled awareness of being family when an *indaba* question one day asked what it meant to be a factory family. In context of the discussion on social construction and transforming workplace community in Chapter 2, I believe that we had gradually entered into authentic community with each other as we were co-authoring our alternative factory story.

Reflecting on Peck's model (Chapter 2), we started to flow between the alternative stories of emptiness (with ethical reflection) and authenticity (*family*). When Vincent heard the news of my departure, he felt as if someone from the family had died. Belina thought that *simunye* would die the day I left, yet she realised that 'we are really brothers and sisters, I mean the real family'. Had the factory not been closed, the belief was widely held in the family that the sense of community was strong enough that the factory would have been able to continue for a considerable period without an MD.

Our formation of a workplace community was a unique answer, in a break with the private sector's long-term enforcement of euro-centric values in the workplace (Mthembu 1996:219). I agree with Barrett's (1998:151) notion, that our transformation journey into family was a journey into wholeness. In our fledgling wholeness we started to feel the effects of sociability and solidarity. Although the factory was closed before we could fully experience and celebrate our sense of community, aspects of community were evident, as discussed in Chapter 4.

The previous discussions on care and trust summarise many of the aspects of community that we experienced. Barrett (1998:144) argues that in strong families people make sacrifices to help one another and trust one another with money and emotions. Family and community life is built around values that support the good of the whole. George remembered, contrary to the pre-transformation days, how he was being greeted by staff members in the stockyard. Maybe George was looking through new community eyes? He also acknowledged that by applying care he could see that people could unite with one another and work towards common goals and have respect for one another.

*In order to help us deconstruct power, I often asked who the workers were. Initially, the answers were that the manual labourers of the factory were the workers. I would then ask if the other people, such as administrative, sales and managerial staff weren't workers? My motive with these questions were to invite understanding that in order to be part of our family, a member had to be a worker, irrespective of position and role. Being a worker became a core value of being family.*

The family adopted a favourite Zulu saying - *lashona ilanga*, meaning 'the sun is setting, we must hurry and get on with our work'. We used this saying often, when meetings tended to take too long, when facing difficulties and when passing each other. For some euro-African family members this saying became the only afro-African words they would speak at work. For many afro-African members, these were the only afro-African words they would ever hear from their euro-African

colleagues. Small social constructions (Chapter 2) as these became part of the unique bonding in the family.

Inclusive spirituality (discussed in Chapter 2) started to play an ever-increasing role in our community.

*I had received requests from the family that we pray together at our indabas to show respect for the sacredness of indaba. I was sensitive to the issue of religious dominance and respectful of the various religious beliefs. In a Theta! Bua! I broached the subject of spirituality by asking if we could have a memorial service at the factory for our deceased brothers (Prinsloo 2001b). On another occasion, I asked if we could have a prayer service, explaining that it would not exclude any family (Prinsloo 2001c).*

After the September-issue of *Theta! Bua!* our indabas were opened by prayer by one of our older afro-African family members, a lay preacher. Spiritual references became more regularly used in our daily language. The first *Theta! Bua!* of 2002 started with: 'We are all safely back! We say thank you to God and everyone that all members of our family have come back to work after the holiday' (Prinsloo 2002). Once our inclusive spirituality prospered, we started to work on a memorial for our deceased family members. Construction on the memorial and peace garden was halted as the factory was closed.

## **5.7 Witnessing progress and success**

Was it not an occasion to witness how our factory continued operating as normal when one of the largest labour unions in South Africa went on national strike? Not only did we continue operating; none of the family members were harmed or intimidated, even with a sister company much larger than ourselves on strike on the same industrial site.

To my understanding, the union and union members recognised that our family was doing something important about our workplace and did not consider it necessary to

affect us with the strike. For the family to continue as normal and not strike was a source of pride and the joy and appreciation of this was witnessed (Chapter 2) with public recognition in the *Theta! Bua!* (Prinsloo 2001c). We also advised head office of this extraordinary event.

In context of the risks in transformation, Kotter (1995:63) warns of declaring victory too soon. Possibly because it was still early days, the family were not witnessing anything more than progress and small victories. In the postmodernist approach, there would not be a final state of transformation to celebrate, and managers would be advised to remember to support and celebrate ongoing transformation.

Once the family realised the sincerity of *simunye*, a delegation visited me to convey appreciation. This acknowledgement was offered for witnessing by the whole family by publicly thanking me in the *Theta! Bua!* (Prinsloo 2001b). The head office human resources manager commented on the family's appreciation of the changes and care (Smack 2001a):

It is easily the most positive thing that has come from the workers at the factory in the last decade and if we can continue this, then it will bring success [my translation from Afrikaans].

## **5.8 Saying goodbye – victory in defeat**

Head office appointed a new Chief Operating Officer (COO) for manufacturing. We witnessed with disempowered distraught how this man, in the power style of the apartheid era management and ruthless capitalism style, started to close the factory down. The communicated rationale was that the head office wanted to consolidate the factory with a sister company. Financial losses were not acceptable and head office wanted to be seen to distance itself from the carcinogenic raw material. Head office did not believe our forecasts of the factory's turnaround.

*I briefed the COO of the family's transformation journey and to no avail tried to convince him to approach the closure ethically and with care. In a short space*

*of time he even started to undermine the spirit and trust in the management team by coercing and contracting with some managers behind our backs. We made various presentations on progress and alternatives, but the COO refused to accept that the factory was in the process of returning to profitability.*

*In response to my requests for ethical governance, he replied that 'he was the Board (of Directors)' and I then realised his actions and power were sanctioned by head office. The COO's actions reminded me of a corporate hyena at work – secure in power and ruthless in its actions to destroy individual lives and organisations (Marais & Herman 1997:13).*

*Regrettably, I accepted the COO's process, and my consulting contract was ended within two day's notice, one month short of the agreed contracting period. To this day I regret not having the prophetic wisdom and courage to resist the COO and head office in my love for the family, and the conviction that I had of the factory's future.*

*In retrospect, I realised that I was protecting my consulting career, fearing that public knowledge of my head office resistance could discourage other companies from contracting my services. Ironically, saving the factory would have supported my career.*

*True to my hat of care, my biggest concern was for the family's well being, yet never before in my life had I felt so aware but disempowered. The best support I could offer at the time was to remind the family to honour our work of simunye. We agreed to take our message wherever we go and trusted that what we had experienced together would support us in our lives, wherever we were. To my mind, our message lives on in this study, in our memories and would be able to touch everyone who hears its telling.*

My last *Theta! Bua!* (Prinsloo 2002) focused on *simunye*:

Let us be reminded, that over time, people do not last – they can die, they can move on. But, what do last, are good principles and good values that people practice. We have good people in our family and many good principles and values are practiced. My wish would be that you continue believing in yourself and these principles – you can make *simunye* wherever you are. Long live *simunye*!

Contrary to the COO's instruction, the family arranged a discreet farewell *indaba* in one of the workshops. Meeting without our usual communal lunch was symbolic of the pain we experienced at saying our goodbyes. The family honoured me with various gifts – the most treasured gift was a blanket given in the afro-African tradition of wishing protection on me. I remember thinking how sad it was that the people at head office who were causing distress with the impending retrenchments were not there to witness our goodwill and care. The impression was that under the COO, 'apartheid was back at the factory and that the factory staff were going to shit again' (Soweto).

Did we save the factory? No. Did *simunye* work? The reader is requested to reflect on this question as the chapter concludes with the *family's* voices:

Freddy: Just before closure the lowest reject statistics were achieved, there was nowhere to apply the energy of enthusiasm. The factory should have been allowed to progress another six months; I think the results would have been astounding.

Solly: A manager from the sister company said that they are moving people to the sister company where there is tough discipline.

Faan: November 2001 was the best month in a long time; it seems as if the factory is recovering. January 2002: I will continue to support the causes I believe in.

Belina: Simunye is alive in all the factory employees, both black and whites.

Su: Head office should have given us another six months – the tide was turning. I am more tolerant of different cultures, more able for open discussion to find common ground,

Prudence: I personally tended my resignation after Kobus announced that he was leaving. The family wanted to strike, but he advised them not to. People were not scared although they knew the factory would close, they had a new way of life.

George: The factory had turned major orders away at the closure, the family remained united and the family still employed remained loyal to *simunye*.

Bokkie: The factory produced record volumes up to its closure.

Cas: Competition increased prices overnight.

Jule: Care for each other is still there, the ground swell we spoke about happened.

Soweto: I am now working at the sister company. You are told what to do but not why you are doing it – your input is not important.

Vincent: We must keep *simunye* with us.

Rob: A culture of standing together was evident.

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## ***Chapter 6. Reflections on the study and hope for the road ahead***

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### **6.1 Introduction**

The discussion in this chapter concludes the dissertation, guided by feminist research perspectives. Reinhartz (1992:194) argues that learning during a research project should occur on the levels of person, problem and method. As discussed in Chapter 1, this argument means the researcher learns about themselves, about the subject matter under study and how to conduct research.

In this chapter I offer a reflection on the study, guided by the intentions set out in Chapter 1, focusing on what was learnt from the research journey.

### **6.2 Reflection on the research curiosity and research aims**

The research curiosity, discussed in Chapter 1, focused on how pastoral therapy and care practices could contribute towards the transformation of workplace culture. With this curiosity as approach, the study was guided by the stated research aims, reviewed in the following paragraphs.

#### ***6.2.1 Research aim no. 1: Reflection on experiences and stories of my factory family***

The intention of this aim was not to merely revisit memories, but reflexively support the re-storying of *our* transformation experience. White and Epston (1990:17,18) argue that a context of reflexivity is provided by a consciousness of one's production of one's productions. Although *we* (the factory family) admit to not being able to save the factory, through our reflection on our reflections, our alternative story tells of victory.

The research aim was achieved in various steps. Firstly by research participants recording the *family's* experiences as stories and comments. These stories were invited by questions during our research meeting (Addendum A). Care was taken with the formulation of the meeting's questions so as not to ask leading questions or embark on egotistical reporting.

The second step consisted of weaving the family's stories in dialogue with literature into the factory's dominant story (Chapter 3), and the factory's alternative story (Chapters 4 and 5). Reflections by the research participants on the stories and draft chapters formed the third step. The cycles of writing, reflection, changes and writing continued until our preferred narrative was established, reflecting a 'recognisable reality' (Maykut & Morehouse 1994:169).

#### ***6.2.2 Research aim no. 2: To reflect on how pastoral care practices can support managers***

The practices discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 supported the factory's management team in doing participatory ethical care, resisting injustice and walking the talk of ethics. To my mind, ethical awareness in pastoral care practices supported *our* growing of trust and the *family's* increased awareness and empowerment. Pattison (1993:35) argues that where pastoral care ignores ethics, it is at risk of promoting values and practices that might even be harmful. I learnt during the course of the research that intentional discussion of unheard and unseen issues like care with people, care with ethics and care with workplace culture supports increased awareness and empowerment.

Looking back on the consulting experience, my commitment to walk the talk of living and doing care has been reconfirmed. However, I believe I would have been better able to do care with my management team had I had the knowledge, language, understanding and experience of pastoral care practices that I now have as a result of the study. Caring with a management team supports their awareness and empowerment to do care amongst each other and within their management structures.

I have realised that care with an MD is most important and although focusing on an MD, this argument is to my mind applicable to managers in general. Business seems to accept that MDs are so robust and such extraordinary people that they are self-maintained. To my mind, stakeholders in business would be well advised to reflect on care with MDs and managers in pre-transformation workplace cultures. In transformed workplace cultures, there is better chance that colleagues could do ethical care with an MD.

In typical pre-transformation hierarchical business structures, MDs are fairly isolated and are often 'supported' (not necessarily ethically cared with), by their management teams and people reporting to them. In a worse case, but apparently a frequently encountered scenario, Marais and Herman (1997:51-77) compare unethical, unaware but empowered management supporters to favour currying 'hyenas in corporate clans'. In such a vicious and degrading comparison, it is questionable how such managers could do ethical care with an MD, or with colleagues.

At the factory, Prudence's ethical reflections offered me much needed support and care. She was particularly ethically sensitive, informed and as an afro-African person knowledgeable about afro-African issues and communication. From my experience with Prudence, two aspects of managerial support became evident – ethical reflection and cross-cultural ethical reflection.

In the first place, the research has convinced me that an MD would benefit greatly from an external, independent reflecting partner. Barrett (1998:52) cites corporate chaplains, in support of emotional and spiritual needs, as part of the care services within 21<sup>st</sup> century organisations. Such a reflecting partner could be engaged in meaningful ethical dialogue and reflection about personal, care, transformation and ethical issues.

Secondly, as argued before, pluralist workplace communities have increased dramatically since the new South African political dispensation. The number of

afro-African managers has increased in positions formerly held by euro-African managers. Euro-African managers have to manage ever-increasing ratios of afro-African colleagues. Not only are the ratios higher, but employees are becoming more aware of ethics and justice. Employee empowerment invites and insists on more consultative and collaborative management styles than during the apartheid-era where subjugation ensured adherence.

Management teams are becoming more culturally diverse resulting in more complex cultural and interpersonal relationships. To my mind South Africa's discrimination history has deprived many people of cross-cultural insight and cultural misunderstandings are more frequent than realised. To my mind managers are at risk for failing, or could do serious damage, having to manage cross-culturally with limited cultural and ethical awareness, yet being empowered.

I believe ethically and culturally informed pastors and pastoral therapists would be well suited as reflecting partners to MDs and managers. Such reflecting partners could be invaluable in facing the challenges of the two hats of care and capitalism. I could well imagine MDs and managers not having the inclination, or the time, to become qualified and experienced in the pastoral field, as is the case with my personal journey. However, they could become informed of the discussed practices through the suggested reflection, pastoral care mentoring and also teaming with participating transformation facilitators during transformation journeys.

My personal assistant at the factory supported me and did developing care with me as her awareness and empowerment increased during the factory's transformation journey. Since personal assistants are often in close relationship with managers, I believe it important to include personal assistants in the increase in awareness of ethics and care. Aware, empowered assistants could well become ethical reflecting partners to managers.

*Our experience with a human potential manager and reflection with the research convinced me that an organisation would benefit greatly from the support of a*

participating care facilitator. Before, or during, transformation an organisation would benefit from the support of an external and independent participating care facilitator. Once a caring workplace culture has been established, then that role by a specific person could be scaled down. However, the role of such a facilitator, not being focused on the day-to-day operational business issues, could support and promote care in a prophetic way – working on the inside, with an outside awareness and perspective.

#### ***6.2.3 Research aim no. 3: Reflectively offer experiences of ethical transformation of workplace culture***

This aim has been achieved by means of Chapters 4 and 5 where the factory's alternative stories reflected on the experiences of our ethical transformation efforts. Initially, we just started living *our* transformation at the factory and did not 'drive a transformation project' via 'transformation interventions'.

During the consultation I learnt how uncomfortable business could become with an unstructured transformation programme. Once news of successes with *our* transformation efforts reached head office, their human resources managers wanted to see supporting documentation and a formal transformation plan. Out of that requirement, and also to inform and coordinate the factory's management team, the Simunye transformation charter was written (Chapter 5). In retrospect, I still agree with *our* decision to incorporate the charter into the transformation dialogue, and not use it as a scientific master plan for transformation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, workplace transformation can be difficult, complex and to my mind should not place the business at financial risk. The director human resources at the factory's head office explained that a sister company mismanaged a transformation project to such an extent that the labour unions took control of the business. This example has strengthened my opinion that informed

and experienced transformation leadership and participatory transformation facilitation are required during workplace transformation.

To my mind, although it has certain benefits, it is not ideal that the transformation leader is also the participating facilitator (Prinsloo & Colleagues 2001:6). I believe it is appropriate that the manager of a workplace should be the transformation leader in that workplace's transformation journey. This has the benefit that the leader can be seen to walk the talk of change, could move the manager to become more people focused and invite the manager into the new social construction of alternative stories. A separate transformation facilitator can be the manager's reflecting partner, be free from business focus and practice care for the transformation process.

Visser and Sunter (2002:47-57) introduced the metaphor of sustainable business transforming into 'caring elephants'. *Our* transforming factory was almost like the leg of an elephant shaking loose from old rheumatism, wanting to walk differently and faster. Unfortunately the elephant's head (the factory's head office) was not in agreement with, or appreciative of, its 'new leg'. *We* learnt that whilst the factory was transforming, head office was not transforming as I had prayed (Chapter 3).

On presenting *our* Simunye transformation charter, the head office director human resources considered *our* transformation three years ahead of the rest of the group, and was not interested to learn from our experiences (Chapter 5). The last news of the group was that the other legs (sister factories) were still stiff with the old rheumatism of their dominant pre-transformation stories.

In the context of transformation that is not lead by top management, Roux and Steyn (2002:178) refer to the difficulties of creating cultural change from 'below'. To my mind this research confirms that transformation leadership and facilitation could, and should work to motivate that the whole 'elephant' transforms, ideally starting with management in the 'head'. I concur with Roux and Steyn that to think that change from 'below' is not possible, is to accept the dominating effects of hierarchical management culture.

At the risk of being rational and too structured, the research has convinced me that transformation leaders and facilitators could be mindful of important aspects during transformation journeys. Such aspects could for example be; to take time and care to explore the dominant stories and co-construct a new (even interim) vision that would symbolise the transformation without detracting from unique outcomes. Other aspects that supported our transformation journey were: to support participant awareness on ethics, power, abuse and care, foster empowerment, take the time to communicate clearly, co-create a transformation charter and walk the talk of ethics and care.

### **6.3 The study's epistemology**

The study's epistemology of contextual theology and social construction discourse (discussed in Chapter 2), supported the research and the study, and is integral to my consulting work. To my mind, literature could often be biased towards theorising. This study also intends to inform the epistemology by showing how practice resulted from *doing* the epistemology. Not only does the study inform, it has also convinced me how appropriate the epistemology is to support workplace culture transformation.

The commitment to work from a contextual theological perspective, does not only supports this study, but also supports my whole consulting experience. From the approaches known to me, contextual theology was preferred to the confessional and correlative approaches. The confessional and correlative approaches are based on the Bible as norm. In my experience, norm-based approaches are prescriptive and too restrictive in the cultural and spiritual diversity of South African workplaces. Inclusive spirituality was discussed in Chapter 2 as alternative to prescriptive religion or theology.

Contextual theology's commitment to intimate knowledge of the situation and siding with marginalised people (Chapter 2), inspired transformation, care, spirituality and ethics at the factory. Bosch (1991:422) argues that Schleiermacher (1768-1834) 'pioneered the view that all theology was influenced, if not determined, by the context

in which it had evolved'. I am curious as to how *our* experiences will inform and help theology to evolve. Our experiences could possibly contribute to Graham's (1996:137) call for work needed to develop pastoral care, which is reconstructive, critical and prophetic. In Section 6.4, the reflection offers a possible contribution toward this evolution. Contextual theology, seen as theology 'from below', regards as its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) the social sciences and it considers *praxis* priority (:423). Contextual theology worked for us – it provided *praxis* within which factory members could thrive and transform.

The contextual approach also offered the perspectives of the prophetic role and prophetic commitment to transformation (Chapter 2). Chapters 4 and 5 illustrated how the prophetic role supports transformation leadership, and offer a source of reflection and inspiration to managers on transformation and transformation leadership.

Pastoral care inspired *our* participatory ethical care within the *family* that did not only help many people, but also invited ethics into our management practices. Trust grew from increased awareness and empowerment through *our* practices of care and reflexive ethics. I believe an awareness and practice of care also moved us to start practicing communal and inclusive spirituality that made room for diverse denominational convictions and practices.

Within a contextual theology approach, practices were applied to real situations and to my mind; this study is a lived demonstration of social construction. The discussion in Chapter 2 illustrates how social construction contributes to the formation of workplace culture through collective dominant stories. Chapter 2's discussion showed how transformation could be co-constructed through witnessing, awareness and empowered participation. Based on the epistemology, I discussed the factory's dominant story in Chapter 3 by means of the stories of the factory's family. Chapters 4 and 5, as collaborated and preferred narratives, concluded with the factory's alternative story, which took place in the *family* due to *our* co-constructed transformation efforts.

## **6.4 Implications of the study on business and theology training.**

In Chapter 1, the influence of business on the pastoral was discussed in the context of the curiosity how the pastoral could influence business. In the approximately thirty business-originated books and articles on transformation that were reviewed for the study, little had been written on care, or how ethics inspire resistance to injustice or transformation of the structures and discourses subjugating people. I find this example indicative of the opportunity of the pastoral informing and influencing business.

I believe pastoral practices could be adopted more often by business by an informing and confrontational way. As experiences, for example offered by this study, become more available, so they can be adopted in business training and awareness. To my mind the influence on business could also happen through pastoral care practices that stare business in the eye. Staring in the eye could almost be as Bosch (1991:435) argues ‘the faces of the poor forced themselves on the attention of the rich Christians of the West in a way that could no longer be ignored’. Business can no longer ignore workplace injustice and not doing care with workplace members.

Pastoral therapists and pastors are hereby challenged to do ethical transformation, publish and inform and let the results stare business in the eye. As argued before, business and society do not have a choice, but to transform. As business notes results and it is clear that theology is not attempting to convert people in the religious context, but help both them and society transform to the common good, so theology, pastoral therapy and care practices could become more attractive.

From the discussion in Section 6.3, I believe the study has shown many aspects that could contribute to the evolution of theology in its shaping of, and being shaped by, practice. I see a convergence of teaching disciplines where theology teaching could fill an important niche. For example, I believe that ethics, care practices and workplace culture transformation could be taught to business audiences by pastors or pastoral therapists outside religious contexts, but within spiritual values.

## **6.5 Personal reflection**

Reinharz (1992:195) argues that researchers can be self-critical, but rather hopes that researchers can be reflexive in order to clarify vision and improve their (future) decisions. I have borne these arguments in mind to avoid becoming absorbed by self-criticism, although I need to be honest about my feelings. I deeply regret that we could not save the factory and did not prevent all the retrenchments. I wished I had stood up stronger to head office and had found ways to better resist the new COO in his unethical and uncaring practices.

I would love to repeat the consulting experience with the changes and development I have experienced in the study. As the factory engagement was the first time that I had managed a business (in my pastoral therapy epistemology), I will have the confidence of how effective the epistemology and practice is. In particular, I relate to the complexities in my field of study, the language of the epistemology, how to practice and how to formulate ideas and communication.

The advantage of the above becomes evident when communicating to management colleagues or clients who have to take transformation matters further. Clear means of communication helps to invite people into understanding. I can also use the knowledge as effective deconstruction and co-construction practices when I resist injustice, trauma, prescriptive ethics and old style capitalism.

What did I learn about myself during the research project? The toughest challenge during the research was to adapt to the required academic standards and practices. I faced this challenge and my resistances through reflection, remaining committed to my studies, being open to learn and being open to the supervisors' feedback and perspectives of the standards.

I generally comprehend new ideas quickly. When ideas are acceptable to me, I also internalise them quickly and then use them creatively. The result is that I usually progress my ideas fast and make large deductive jumps in my reasoning and communication. This manner often loses people during important communication,

verbal or written. Through consistent self-discipline and growing awareness of benefits, the study has invited me to slow down, structure my ideas logically and consider others in the deductive jumps and the communication of these ideas. To my mind, this slowing down and careful formulation is critically important in collaborative, participatory and social constructionist interactions.

I am committed to my creativity and over many years have learnt not to ride on 'who said what', and thereby own what I speak of. I have realised that many of my ideas are not original, albeit original in my personal constructions. The research has convinced and humbled me to invite the voices of literature into my work and be open to other ideas, work and experience. I am much the richer for accepting this practice, and am still learning to weave with my creativity in dialogue with literature.

The pressures and experience of the corporate business world has conditioned me to work fast and expect rapid results. I had to apply patience and perseverance to allow the study to form in the cycles of reading, writing, supervisor's feedback and editing.

Over many years I have been adapting my bias from cognitive and rational therapy practice to a more holistic practice. Within the holistic approach to my practice I have been embracing my spiritual and intuitive gifts, empathy and emotional abilities. The study's cognitive bias, ironically as theology to my mind lives in the realm of the divine, spiritual and mystical, has caused me great stress in not having much room for my other aspects and processes. I have felt like an artist allowed only to paint in one colour. I even feared losing my holistic gifts and capabilities due to the intense cognitive work over an extended period. Fortunately this fear was unfounded. I believe I have rather received a gift through the study of a more reflective and cognitive capability that complements my holistic approach.

In retrospect, I believe the consulting experience at the factory could have been much different – transformation could have been faster and business improved faster. I realise that I was severely stretched between the business and transformation focus – I wanted to do both and believed I had to do both. If I had not been too proud to ask for outside help or intimidated by head office's attitude about

more consultants, we could have invited other pastoral therapists into the factory's transformation journey. The study has reminded me that a different ethical awareness could have moved me to resist issues, personal or other, from preventing better care for the *family*.

I believe many prophetic qualities, such as courage, culture brokering, ethical reflection and vision (Chapter 2) are needed when promoting, expanding and sustaining the idea of transformation in business, especially within 'old style capitalism'. Old style managers seem to resist transformation for fear that increased awareness of ethics would not only show unethical practices, it could uncover their own practices. These old style managers also seem to resist increased empowerment of other workplace members, as it would threaten their own power bases and styles.

## **6.6 Reflection on the research approach and process**

In Chapter 1 I argued for a qualitative reflective approach to the study, particularly as the study took shape after the consulting tenure at the factory. My preferred approach would have been a participatory action approach (McTaggart 1997:27), during the consulting tenure. To my mind, that approach could have supported the *family* better in their journey, during the journey, by increasing awareness and empowerment. Such increased awareness and empowerment would support what Kotzé (2002:4-6) considers participatory consciousness, which would be invaluable in supporting ethical transformation.

Kincheloe (1991:1) argues that knowledge has become a source of power in society. The qualitative approach, through its notion of good work (:4), has supported the study's generation of knowledge for justice, ethics and the common good. To my mind, the study is based in *praxis* (:20), even as *our* practices were not as informed as they are after the study.

Feedback from the research participants have indicated that their involvement in co-creating the study have afforded them the opportunity to be part of the return of

knowledge. Being part of the return of knowledge reminds me of not seeing people as objects, but connecting knowers and known (:26) so that the study would emancipate them as it has emancipated me. The reflective approach helped the study to be critical of itself and supported a critical social science that uncovered the discourses and processes that shaped our social relations (:2).

As was the case with this research, reflective research happens after the event and relies on memory. Fortunately, I kept all my consulting notes and factory documents from which I could construct a diary of events to support the memory of the research. During the research meeting (Chapter 3), personal accounts and stories were written by the research participants, which brought the research into present time. In support of reference, I found it handy to bind the different phases of participant feedback in time frames and chapters.

As discussed earlier, the questions in the research meeting (Addendum A) were asked carefully not to be leading questions. This had the effect that the research did not go where I thought it would or should. The questions at the research meeting were also carefully formulated as to generate stories for research, but also to generate actions for reflection (Roux & Kotzé 2002:146). The action for reflection was important due to the study's approach being reflective. The resultant unexpected perspectives and opinions informed the study with many unheard and unsought issues and ideas. Due to space constraints, I selected stories and comments in support of particular themes. Unfortunately, this means that differing opinions are not visible, and to my mind could form the basis of a study of its own.

The research relied on the goodwill of the research participants and the research meeting was well supported. However, over time, after some cycles of writing and reflection, many participants increasingly found less time to reflect and comment. I could well accept the changed priorities, but had to work at sustaining motivation, patience and interest to see all reflections through. George played a most supportive role in this regard – he would hand and collect drafts personally and motivate participants as much as possible.

Without ethical awareness, the supervisor's reflection and personal change through the study, I would probably have focused and claimed the study primarily for my education. I am satisfied and proud that I have completed the study for others – the family, and everyone else committed to workplace culture transformation. Through the cycles of writing and reflection, I experienced the reflections with the research participants becoming reciprocal and shaping the domain of study as Gergen and Gergen (1991:93) consider relational reflexivity. The relational reflexivity also helped me to reach closure on the defeat and victory of our transformation efforts.

The research has been reflexive of itself with the research participants. Research questions regularly asked how the participants were experiencing the research process, and invited their changes to the research process. Participants were excited and satisfied with the research process and I have received many requests for copies of the completed dissertation.

## **6.7 Hope for and views of the road ahead**

My research has discovered a growing volume of literature that warns against old capitalist practices and is suggesting ways forward. Growing voices are calling for sustainable business practices wherein ethics and care feature prominently. Bernard Lietaer (2001:v), father of the Euro currency system, dedicated his book *The future of money* to: 'For your children. For the children's children, and the trees.' In context of global challenges including climatic change, species extinction and monetary instability, Lietaer (:76) quotes Harman:

Our societies have reached a point where transformation is not optional anymore.

The study was inspired by my awareness of workplace trauma and stress (Chapter 1) and argued for workplace transformation that is supported by, and in turn supports, social transformation towards a more just and ethical society. I believe that awareness for drastic societal and business transformation is growing. To my mind, this means that pastoral therapists, pastors and managers are increasingly going to

be called on to support transformation. It is hoped that efforts such as this study will inform and support such participatory transformation facilitators.

Visser and Sunter (2002:47) believe that: 'the common good is not being served by today's predatory business model', and that: 'in a sustainability era, a company's success will depend on being able to cultivate win-win relationships with all its stakeholders' (:45).

With business stakeholders I include shareholders, members of workplaces, the environment, clients, suppliers and society in relation with that business (geographically, commercially and socially). To my mind, Visser and Sunter's win-win relationships can be supported by expanding a business' participatory ethical care to do care with all stakeholders of that business.

This expansion of participatory ethical care would mean increased ethics and thereby workplace and social transformation can and should join forces on a global scale. Not only would workplace transformation be needed, but also workplace evolution as an extension of transformation. Barrett (1998:14) argues for evolution as a state of continual transformation and change that would involve constant adjustment in values, behaviours, and beliefs.

Transformation and evolution efforts can contribute to the challenge of developing new economic practices that will make living possible for all - including future generations. Lietaer (2001:260-298) argues for a new world economy of sustainable abundance. He proposes the concept *ecosophy* as how to live wisely on this planet (:261). From their Greek roots, *ecosophy* (wisdom of the household) is similar to the etymology of *ecology* (knowledge of the household) and *economy* (rules of the household). The planet itself is considered sustainable and the question is whether it would include us human beings (:267).

## **6.8 Saying goodbye**

As argued from a social constructionist perspective in Chapter 2, there is also no conclusion and final word to this study. There is however a 'final wish' for an ever-

growing body of knowledge, experience, reflection, dialogue and stories. This growing knowledge is dedicated to support care, justice, awareness, empowerment and ethical practices in the workplace.

To my mind, the writing of this study happened in four relationships – with *our factory family*, with literature, with the academic world, and with all future readers. Gergen (2002:1) argues that:

[w]riting is fundamentally an action within a relationship; it is within relationship that writing gains its meaning and significance.

This study was not intended to support a form of writing that, according to Gergen (2002:3), would contribute to ‘alienated relationships, the creation of inadequacy and an atomistic and hierarchical conception of society’. It is rather hoped that the study has offered connective writing that is open to the ‘Other’ (:4). From an ethical perspective I ask if this writing is open to *an other* - are readers benefiting from this study?

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## **Addendum A**

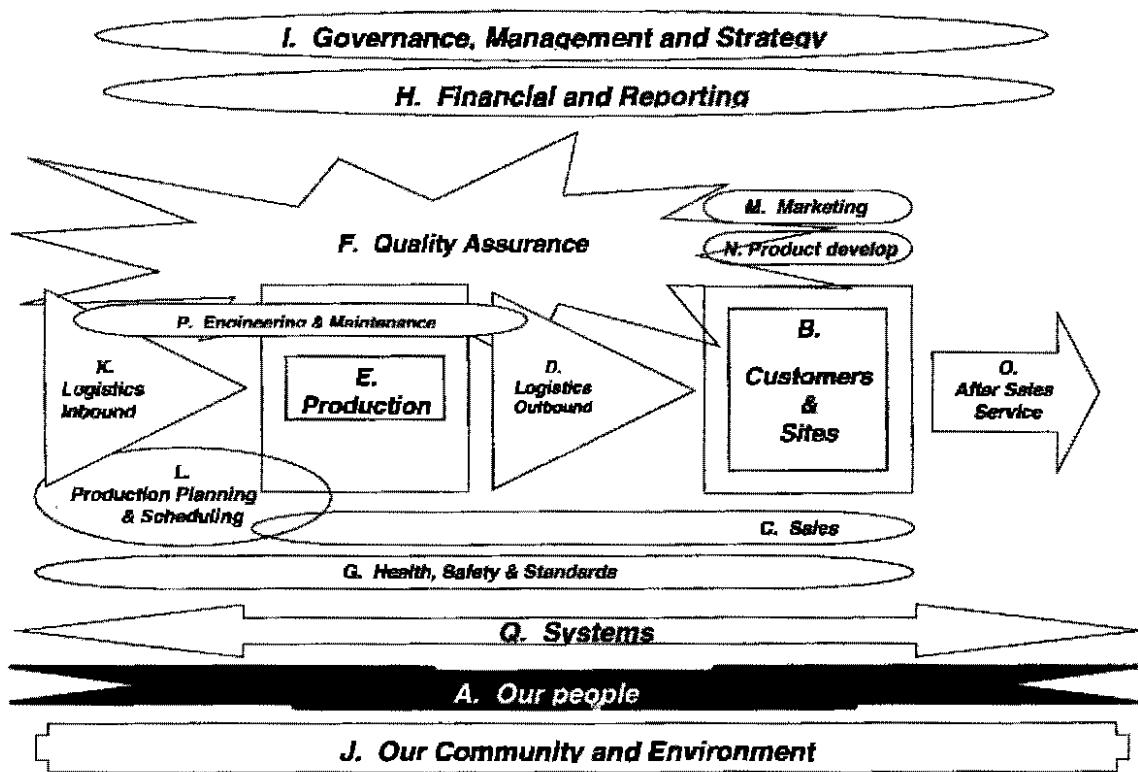
### **Questions in the research meeting**

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- ❖ How were matters at the factory and what were your experiences before Kobus' arrival?
  - ❖ During Kobus' time at the factory:
    - Which events stand out to you during that time?
    - What practices did you see and what did you experience from those practices?
    - What worked or did not work for you, or in your opinion; for other people?
    - What would you have done differently?
    - What lessons did you learn?
    - What personal inspiration did you get that you could take with you in life?
  - ❖ After Kobus' departure;
    - How were matters at the factory?
    - What inspirations could you take with you in life?
  - ❖ How are you experiencing the research process?
  - ❖ What changes would you like to the research process?
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## Addendum B

### Factory management priorities



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## **Addendum C**

### **Responses by research participants with Homeless Talk article**

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#### **Non-managers' initial comments:**

The manager not keeping his words. Dishonesty. The employee trusted the manager that she wouldn't lose her job. Both manager and the employee were dishonest. Unfortunately more emphasis is placed on fraudulent misdemeanours and the employee paid a heavier penalty than the employer. Dishonesty (manager said to the woman if she returns the money she will retain her job). Dishonesty is what I experience in this article, the manager did not keep his promise to keep the job of the woman. The woman was dishonest to steal from her employer.

#### **Non-managers' comments after discussion:**

No trust. Manager got too much power, like at the factory. There was no trust between the management and the woman. The manager did not try to discover why she took the money. The employee was not given the opportunity to make amends. Both manager and employee were losers. In the factory, the head office did not consider the action they took through retrenchments how many families are going to suffer! This shows me that crime does not pay. The manager will always have a guilty conscience for not keeping his promise. The employees in the shop will not give money back because they have realised that it won't help in anyway. They will steal and get away with it.

#### **Managers' initial comments:**

Not the right way to deal with the situation, even if it yielded the correct result in getting the money back. Subsequent action taken was impersonal, contradictory, and made no humane attempt to take into account her personal situation. Bullshit. Dishonesty. Unethical. Forced submission. Unfair labour practice – use of power. A difficult decision to

make but I agree with the outcome as we cannot condone such an offence. The extent of the offence does not matter; it is a breach of trust. Ridiculous. You don't make promises and then break them. Demonstrates that honesty (owning up) is not the best policy. Whilst stealing is wrong, worse is to compound dishonesty with dishonesty. The lesson to learn is if you break the law don't own up – you have a 50% chance or better, of not being caught. Sad, that the lady had to steal to make ends meet. Disgusted that in trust she complied with a request only to be lied to on a promise being broken. Two wrongs don't make a right. Either side ethics are misplaced. No trust on either side. The behaviour of the manager was unethical. Maybe this does not condone the woman's behaviour. Maybe she got her just reward. No formal system to deal with the unjust behaviour of the manager. He did not get his just reward.

**Managers' comments after discussion:**

No integrity. Manager used an injustice to achieve justice. How could the manager discipline unethical behaviour in an unethical manner? Workplace culture would have been destroyed. A culture takes years to build, but can be destroyed by a single action. The actions were unethical. The workplace culture changed to untrustworthy. Don't use unethical (dishonest) tactics to bring to justice or to solve a problem. The workplace culture will change to dishonesty – no trust at all. The workplace ethos will now reflect an air of mistrust of employees' relationship with management. The manager had the opportunity to create a level of trust, which was destroyed and will ultimately lead to a distrustful workplace culture. The workplace culture would not be affected in a positive way. The trustworthiness of the manager will suffer.

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## Addendum D

### **Simunye transformation charter**

**Simunye – we are one!**

**November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001**

### **Charter for company culture transformation to authentic business family**

#### **1. What is Simunye?**

It is being in a community of like-spirited people in the Company – to become a united family of workers, dedicated to the Company's reasons for existence. Being in community means to interact with each other with respect, passionately learn from each other, communicate authentically, celebrate our humanness and together find paths to form the new Company culture.

We need humanness business practices that are sensitive to power use, discrimination, judgement, promotes two-way communication, promotes profitability, that are consultative, promotes accountability, empowers people, and fosters contemporary leadership practice. We need to practice care in our business – for each other, for our products, and for our effect in the market place.

Simunye, is **not** a "canned intervention" that one can learn from a book, or be forced from outside by some "intervention specialist". It is **not** a flight of fancy of imagination and wild philosophy. It is **not** an experiment.

Simunye is a commitment from the heart. It is based in sound humanness and business principles and has to be lived pragmatically. It is a professionally facilitated journey, where a co-constructed growth process is invited and to be trusted. It is a process whereby change is introduced, connectedness celebrated, but leaders challenged to excellence and responsibility. Simunye will help us become a world-class business family, and fulfill our vision (Section 3)!

#### **2. Background**

The factory embarked on cultural transformation in July 2001, to co-construct a new way with its people. Simunye was initiated by the factory Management Team, after realizing that something urgent, substantial and sustainable had to be done to improve the humanness of the Company. Only by improving our people, and our humanness, are we able to improve our business, and return the Company to profitability. Transformation means deep and permanent change. If the factory does not transform, it will be continuing with "more of same", and receive "more of same results" - financial loss and unhappiness.

The name and metaphor of Simunye was chosen to align with the spirit of post-apartheid South Africa, it is deeply rooted in our African heritage, irrespective of our ancestry. (Refer to President Mbeki's State address on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001: "Change through unity".)

Thus far, our efforts are fairly well accepted and appreciated. We are encouraged to continue with our commitment.

**Simunye stands a good chance to work because there are many positive and functional aspects already in the business that supports the process:**

- ✓ High loyalty amongst staff,
- ✓ High levels of experience (although some skills and experience were lost due to downsizing),
- ✓ Able and positive leaders on various levels,

**4<sup>th</sup> draft**

- ✓ Hard workers,
- ✓ Perseverance and resilience under difficult trading conditions,
- ✓ Pride in being part of the Company,
- ✓ Openness of heart to accept the new Managing Director and to go with the Management Team's initiative of change,
- ✓ Respected relationships with many clients, consultants, contractors, etc,
- ✓ Proven production process,
- ✓ Celebrated and proven product,
- ✓ Ethical business practices (carcinogenic use, health standards, etc),
- ✓ Willingness to follow leaders.

The "problems" (challenges) were, and are, varied and plentiful, to list some of the more pressing:

- A legacy of domineering/low consultation/low inclusion management styles,
- Absence of general authentic (two-way) communication between all levels of workers,
- Perceptions of division between "management" and "workers" (management aren't workers),
- Unions viewed as threats,
- Legacy of stool pigeons – workers set up previously to report on others,
- Low spirit of care,
- Theft on site,
- Abused managers,
- Low self-esteem,
- Remnants of discrimination,
- Neglected personal and professional development,
- Areas of low motivation,
- Low trust in Management, especially (fast changing) Managing Directors,
- Low product sales and resulting fear for the loss of jobs,
- Persistent product quality problems,
- Rubble all over the yard,
- Stock chaos in yard,
- Suspicions of manufacturing sabotage - deliberate and accidental,
- Depressed markets (changed markets),
- Suspicious of "changes" that would just be other forms of exploitation,
- Neglected automation,
- Uncertainties on carcinogenic material future,
- High levels of failing worker health (HIV),
- Low Safety & Health management, non-caring workers – loss of NOSA grading,
- Stale company image and aged products,
- Constant fear of imminent closure,
- Sales reps brow beaten with market depression, product resistance, sharp competition, inadequate company support (service, quality, incentives),
- Persistent financial losses,
- Unfulfilled promises (management incentives),
- Low standards of administrative and health support,
- Confusing Group message - pressure to perform but no effective support to use product, innovate, stabilize the business, etc,
- Fear of product redundancy due to the pressured marketing and production of plastic product,
- Large stock not moving,
- afro-African staff do not see them being promoted (no progress with employment equity, perceived unfair promotions).

### **3. Vision, values, objectives, initiatives and practices**

First and foremost, we want to achieve the factory vision:

*4<sup>th</sup> draft*

*"In the next two years, we want to become a happy, profitable, visionary, innovative, fair and caring business family that supplies quality product solutions through excellent service, to serve our clients', children's children."*

This vision is aligned with Head office's vision/mission:

***"Providing customer value by delivering quality and innovative infrastructure solutions across the full value chain".***

Secondly, we want to live our values - so that we "walk our talk". Walking our talk is at the core of being a business family - being in community with each other, we are shaped by our values and shape them in turn!

Quoting Elaine Graham: "...values are always already embodied in the practice of community." (1996:138).

Our business values are aligned with the Head office values, which were communicated to senior management during October 3-5, 2001:

1. Quality
2. Customer orientation,
3. Honesty,
4. Teamwork,
5. Performance.

The Simunye objectives have been loosely "banded" by opinions on urgency, ease of introduction, and the cost and time required for adoption.

#### ***Quick, (natural) change***

- Practice care,
- Critical reflection on managerial effect,
- Practice recognition,
- Forgive mistakes, but learn the lessons,
- Ethical business practices,
- The family only has room for dedicated workers, be they office workers, factory workers, etc,
- Achieve quick victories and communicate them,
- Practice friendliness,
- Hold each other in wonder and be open to learn something new everyday,
- Do things right the first time,
- Communicate our vision and the Simunye "ingredients",
- Practice radical honesty,
- Respect each other as equal humans,
- Practice assertiveness for the good of the family,
- Show commitment,
- Walk our talk
- Under-promise and over-deliver,
- Rekindle hope,
- Promote belonging,

#### ***More effort required***

- ♦ Foster pride in work (realize, it is no just a product, it is a contribution, a solution),
- ♦ Develop and maintain a sense of urgency,
- ♦ We go the "extra mile" for each other, and for clients,
- ♦ Face the truth on how we are doing,
- ♦ It is ok and needed to be personally (emotionally) visible to each other,
- ♦ Practice consultative and participative management (on all levels),

*4<sup>th</sup> draft*

- ◆ Give more than what we take (to each other, followers, clients),
- ◆ Celebrate our African roots – by birth or by adoption – afro-african, euro-african, etc..
- ◆ Adopt new language (problems are challenges, externalising, metaphors, care, excellence, etc),
- ◆ Stop being "order takers", become "deal makers",
- ◆ Externalise problems,
- ◆ Mature the business ethics,
- ◆ Challenge members of the family to change, rather than leave us,
- ◆ Practice our communal spirituality,
- ◆ Develop sensitivity to "dominant stories" - power, politics, scapegoating, etc,
- ◆ Unite all workers against threats to the family – crime, bad quality, theft, work pressure, competition, etc
- ◆ Unlock creativity,
- ◆ Solve discrimination issues,
- ◆ Attend important staff functions (funerals, etc),
- ◆ Subject personal differences and unacceptable standards to the vision and needs of the family,

#### ***Deeper change***

- Invite contribution of wisdom and experience,
- Develop people,
- Foster a learning organization,
- Trust empowerment for progress,
- Foster effective decision making,
- Follow a program of continuous innovation,
- Practice tolerance for diversity of background, culture and values,
- Foster micro-entrepreneurial thought and actions,
- Promote accountability and responsibility,
- Foster responsibility and accountability,
- Have balanced fun at work,
- Become authentic community,
- Practice extraordinary customer care,
- Foster authentic employment equity,

#### **4. Follow a paced and sustainable process**

Without saying, a paced process is followed. It would be impractical to rush the process, yet momentum (and a sense of urgency!) has to be maintained. It would be unacceptable to have "flash-in-the-pan" interventions that are not sustainable.

The process is not driven by "working through a hit list of aims", but up to now it has been "change by opportunity". There are too many opportunities that require attention, and there is a risk of rejection if we want to go to deep, too soon.

We have been progressing Simunye through inspiration and walking the talk of our leadership. Now, we are moving consciously to facilitate managers/leaders to pursue individual processes in the aforementioned lists.

#### **5. The Charter**

This document forms our "baseline" for understanding and progressing Simunye. It is co-created with the Management Team and Middle Managers, and once in final format it will reflect our commitment and options to transform our Company culture.

The aim of the Charter is:

1. Inform, educate and guide all our managers and leaders,
2. Facilitate interaction with Head office's transformation plan,

*4<sup>th</sup> draft*

3. Offer inspiration and examples to other Head office business units that are ready and open for change.

## 6. Approach and Departure

The Management Team is approaching Simunye on the basis that we treat other people how we expect to be treated! Although Simunye is basic and natural, we accept that it will take time, effort and "paradigm shuffle" to make it happen. We trust the process and are committed to live in a different Company, in a short time! We understand that we need to learn to un-learn old ways, and re-learn new ways of doing, behaving and managing. We are learning to embrace change and live it and breathe it in our private lives and at work.

The Management Team's departure into Simunye:

- Our business depends on its people,
- Our changes are based on basics principles of humanness and business – they need to work for each person, personally,
- We are human beings, all connected through holism,
- We are all workers – be they factory workers, management workers, etc,
- We all have a positive intent for the Company – everyone here wants the Company to succeed, and everyone can benefit from a better Company,
- It is a process of optimizing what is already working and adopting new practices that excite us. It is not getting stuck on problem analysis,
- We do not waste too much time on analysis and talking - we act in the new ways – "walking our talk"!

## 7. Leadership

The Chinese have a saying: "**A fish rots from the head**". It is to remind us that good and visionary leadership is key to the success of a cultural transformation process. If transformation leadership does not exist, then the organization (the fish) will decay from management onwards.

It is not an option for all leaders in our business not to live Simunye. Strong and clear leadership is required, based on personal conviction. Once transformation gains real momentum, most people take to it "like fish to water", and it becomes an exciting and self-energizing process.

The Management Team, all our managers, superintendents and foremen are leaders. Leadership is a challenge and makes for good people and good business, to quote Joel Barker on leadership concepts:

- ✓ *A leader is someone people choose to follow to a place they would not normally go by themselves,*
- ✓ *A leader builds bridges between the present and the future,*
- ✓ *The characteristics of a leader never changes - courage, commitment, communication, compassion, trust, loyalty, integrity and inspiration.*

Currently in our Company, the MD is not only the transformation leader, but also the transformation facilitator. It is not always ideal to combine these two roles, as it increases the non-direct business workload of the MD. It also does not afford proper time to facilitate the transformation process, and mentor the other leaders. However, it has the benefit of having the facilitator right inside the business, and change is initiated directly. The MD can be seen to walk the talk.

The leaders need to be supported, otherwise they will burn out and Simunye will fail. It is every leader's responsibility to be open for feedback, but to be strong and decisive on the support and standards of the next level of reportees.

The MD will lead his Team to a place where they would not normally go by themselves!

## 8. Management commitment, creativity and resilience

4<sup>th</sup> draft

Simunye will challenge all leaders to excellence. Positive attitudes towards life in general, and Simunye in particular, will make the difference - we can be successful or we can fail.

The success of transformation is dependent on the Management and Middle Management Teams' complete buy-in, and commitment to live the transformation. Although the values and objectives are very basic, and would be natural, it could be quite difficult to re-learn these as new ways. It is imperative for managers to identify the personal and business benefits of transformation. They are invited to continue questioning and challenging, until they find their benefits.

Transformation is not an easy process - one has to trust, use courage, wisdom and imagine the outcome. If it is done authentically, then mistakes are not catastrophic and humanness prevails. Consider this daily wonder in nature, that could also be a metaphor for a new and wonderful The factory:

*"The caterpillar doesn't know that he'll come out as a butterfly. All he knows is that he's alone, it's dark, and it's a little scary." (Mort Meyerson, Chairman Perot Systems from Hey & Moore: 1998).*

We will not always be in agreement, but we have to find ways to agree to disagree and to keep on co-seeking unique outcomes. It is not acceptable to have silent disagreement, or even worse; silent resistance (even undermining). Part of our more mature management environment is the invitation that managers can be personally visible as to what they think and feel. Managers need to develop the courage to hear their reportees out and foster two-way discussions, even if it would appear confrontational.

The transformation process could be perceived to threaten people's positions and undermine the (traditional) management power base. If leadership and management are based on insecurity and dominance, if values are outdated or destructive, then there would be need for personal changes (they did not plan or envision!). Will managers have the courage to change, or will they hide behind excuses? Will they step up to "make a stand for change"?

Managers need to support and coach each other in the transformation process. Until it becomes a way of life, it can seem very difficult and overbearing. The concepts of Simunye are basic and are quite natural, some have just not applied them for a long time.. By relying on each person's basic alignment with the principles of Simunye, managers need to be creative to enable themselves and in turn enable their reportees. An important principle is forgiveness for mistakes, but with the challenge that it can only happen once - we have to learn and improve.

All managers will be challenged to responsibility and excellence for their support of Simunye, their deliveries and progress towards the family's vision. All managers need to be like bamboo! (Please refer to section 13 - the use of metaphors).

## 9. Critical ethical reflection

During value-directed transformation (*praxis*), it is imperative to reflect on the process:

- ⇒ Who benefits from this initiative/objective?
- ⇒ How can it work personally?
- ⇒ How do we know, what we do, is right?
- ⇒ How do we know, what we do, is good and sustainable?
- ⇒ How does this promote our vision?

Ethical reflection refers to fairness of practice and critical refers to the openness and courage required for honest feedback. Continuous reflection is an integral part of Simunye's risk management (please refer to Section 15 - Risk Management).

Reflective questions help to maintain an awareness of the effects of the actions that are taken to progress Simunye. It not only invites feedback, but also addresses the intent and manner in which an issue is addressed or progressed.

*4<sup>th</sup> draft*

## **10. Externalizing problems**

**"the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem"**

We have a choice of attitude, approach and language to externalise problems.

**For example:** Is theft due to a) "bad person", or b) are there external factors that influence/compel someone to steal?

If the approach is a) - that it is a bad person, then punishment would be the first and logical course of action. If we reflect for a moment - does the punishment solve the problem, is it the best we can do?

If the approach is b) - external factors, then we can invite that person to responsibility to make a stand with us against those factors. Reflection will show that we can now co-construct a meaningful change, that will be consistent solution.

By externalizing problems from people, and treating people as people, we prevent problem-saturated language from labeling a person as "the problem". The risk of labeling a person, is that it restricts another to hold an open mind of that person. It could also introduce self-restricting language and behaviour by that person; "I am a thief and will be treated as such, and have no choice but to behave as to who I am..".

Externalising helps us to be easy on people, but be hard on problems. "Problems" and challenges should not be tolerated and addressed vigorously to sort.

We can invite people to stand against the challenges, problems and issues that would prevent them from supporting the family's vision. The family can therefore also be invited to stand together against problems. This mobilization forms the departure of Care Groups, which could be initiated in the new year.

## **11. Facilitating a co-constructed approach**

Co-construction is the further step along the path of consultative management. It is the securing of an unique outcome or solution when participation is facilitated in new and different ways. It is not just instructing and others do! It contains the work of consensus, trust, effort and patience.

Often people just resist a new idea, or sit around that someone else implements. In that manner, it is always someone else's fault if the idea fails. In co-construction, anyone's idea is welcome, and the group has a responsibility to engage therewith in a constructive, rather than pessimistic, manner. We rather ask of the ways in which it could work, than just tell why it won't work. The group has to do the work of reaching workable consensus and then if the merits and benefits are clear in support of the family's vision, to engage and mutually co-construct the new solution. The initiator has to trust the group's contributions, and the facilitator to help steer the process to conclusion in time-frame and scope.

At the core of co-construction lies a passion to be "constructively discontent" - not to accept standards at face value, but to want things to be better. It is not passive criticism, but an action oriented process.

All managers are facilitators of co-construction. It is often a challenge to patience and one's resilience to allow a group to seek and do the work of creative chaos in order to arrive at the solution. Pragmatics dictate that it's the leadership/management prerogative to make decisions if time runs out. But fostering the process teaches people to become better at it, and it results in buy-in from the word go.

## **12. Holism is human**

Another core principle of Simunye is holism. Holism applied to our family means that we are connected and are affected by what happens in any part of the business. The most direct example is that if one part of the family makes bad quality product, the whole family will suffer due to less business. Consider, if one manager fails to support Simunye, then it hampers the efforts of all the other manners.

Holism also goes much deeper - it tells of humankind's connectedness. We all breathe air, we will all eventually suffer if one group poison's "just their part of the air". We are all ~~children of Nature~~ - she

*4<sup>th</sup> draft*

supports us with food, sunshine, rain etc. Nature not only nurtures us, but if we are open, she can also teach us the most wonderful lessons - about life, family, business and much more.

We are all spiritual, social, mental; and emotional beings, irrespective on how we express and practice our spirituality. The wonder is to co-discover the golden threads that connect us through our differences! It is therefore a fallacy to believe we can manage people on simplistic, and isolated principles. How is it possible that a worker: "does not bring his/her family-life to work, and in turn take their work-life home"? Is it possible to install a work ethic of pride, if people aren't even proud to report to work?

We are not saying people are the same, we are saying we have the same issues and aspects. For example, does the rampant crime in our country care what colour or values, or spirituality you have? Does HIV affect its victims only, or are we all affected?

Holism also calls us to care for communities and our environment. Care for each other calls us to care for our family business, which calls us to care for our clients. How would it be possible to care for our clients, if we are not caring for each other in the family?

### **13. Use of metaphors**

The use of metaphors in language is a rich way of communicating, as the values and images represented in metaphors invite people emotionally and creatively to contribute to the theme being communicated. It is often a very effective way of communicating and establishing a new value/standard - one is reminded of the saying: "a picture paints a thousand words"!

Metaphors occur naturally in most languages and cultures, and our (Southern) African cultures are rich in the use of metaphor. People relate naturally to their use, and once it becomes part of new language, it invites contribution from the most unexpected sources. Care should be taken to use metaphors that the audience can relate to. For example; our African heritage, and its closeness to nature, offers abundant metaphors that are easily understood by many audiences.

There are no limits to the use of metaphors, just start playing with them and use them - see the results. We have already been using various metaphors, to list some examples:

- "**A dead ship, on a lee shore**" - this signals a most dangerous and helpless situation. Without power the ship has no way on her and therefore not steerable. In the same manner can a business not be directed if there is not enough human energy applied and business process running. A lee shore means the ship is being blown and washed onto the rocks and will founder if some emergency action is not taken. Due to continued neglect and tough market conditions, The factory is being washed up on the rocks, and unless our improvement measures are accepted (and work!), the company will not survive,
- "**Walking our talk**" - this is living our values and Simunye by example. It is to apply Simunye because it works, and to show that we do what we believe in. It is also the way to advise reportees to: "do as I do, not do as I tell you",
- "**Simunye**" - we are one. It is a deep African belief that people are united,
- "**Get everyone on the same page**" - make sure our communication is good and will include everyone concerned for an issue,
- "**Our Amadoda product**" - this is symbolic on the very strong and long-lasting product that we manufacture. However, when we are still manufacturing them, they are as fragile as babies and require careful handling and treatment,
- "**Tsotsi product**" - are what we call bad quality product because their failure in the market steals business from us,
- "**Leaders must be like bamboo**" - when the strong winds of tough times blow, leaders must become more friendly - they wave! They are also flexible - they bend, and they are strong - they don't break! And they are wise - they stick together as a bunch!
- "**We are family**" - family values from our African heritage are strong and known by many people. These values accept that there is a head - the MD. They also accept that decisions and actions that are taken in the family's interest, supersedes the individual. We are family, united in our business vision. We are all family, whether we are afro-african, or euro-african,

*4<sup>th</sup> draft*

- "Our Lions" - our sales people hunt for business like lions. We need to bring business to the family so that the whole family can eat (have business).
- "Our Lions are on the front of the amadoda arrow" - the lions can't secure business on their own, if we don't launch them as the sharp end of an arrow that is based on good quality product, excellent client service and an effective plant,
- "Deal makers are rainmakers" - the days of our lions catching orders by lying under the trees and wait are long over. We have to now create our own orders and move into solution selling. Order takers are undertakers and live with vultures to pick on empty bones after the lions have been!
- "Our weaver birds" - our technical staff are highly industrious and maintain and repair our nests (equipment) whenever there is something wrong!

## 14. Keeping the pressure where it belongs

Simunye will challenge the family to excellence, responsibility and accountability. Calling people to responsibility is important as that is where the delivery of Simunye's actions reside. The main question is: is this good enough for our family?

Lack of progress is not negotiable as a loss of momentum could result in a fall back to a position worse than where we departed from. So, although we do not want to go too deep too fast, we need to keep on pushing the "old ways of doing things". The MD's task is to keep the pressure on the Management Team to live Simunye. In turn, they need to guide and mentor their reportees to follow.

We cannot shrink into greatness!

## 15. Risk Management

Effective risk management will contribute to the success of Simunye and signal to all concerned what our plans are to address problems before they can derail our process. In line with good planning, this work would serve to pre-empt more than rectify. The risk management incorporates the eight aspects of transformation failure as described by John P. Kotter in the Harvard Business Review of March-April 1995. The risks are not listed in any particular order.

The risk	What to do?
Losing middle management in the process.	Communicate, mentor and monitor.
Leave other Head office business units behind	Regular communication with Head office, invite them to support us
Unions reacting to a threat of their power base	Transparent communications with the Unions, and showing the need for survival
Not doing the right things	Consistent critical reflection
False promises	Under-promise and over-deliver, we need to guard not to create hype with false expectations.
Abdicating management prerogatives and responsibilities	Managers will remain managers and will be tasked to responsibility and accountability.
Suppress growing maturity of non-managers.	Encourage growth - managers need to make room for new managers
Working too fast, too deep	Watch for stress and slow down
Failure to establish and maintain a great enough sense of urgency	Keep pressure on the Management Team, communicate and explain the up and down sides
Silent resistance	Address managerially and invite feedback
Not creating a powerful enough guiding team	Mobilize the Management Team
Lacking a vision and not communicating	Co-create and communicate regularly
No removing the obstacles	Identify, and address vigorously
Not planning and attaining short-term wins	Go for them and celebrate them.
Declaring victory too soon	Celebrate wins, but understand that authentic transformation takes time.
Not anchoring changes in the Company culture	See that we walk our talk not because someone says so, but it makes for a better family!

4<sup>th</sup> draft

## 16. Actions

What to do?	How to?	By whom?	By when?
Introduce and practice a "new" MD management style	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deal with the Management Team differently (MD's own style).</li> <li>2. Start by meeting the Team outside business, not as managers, but as fellow human beings.</li> <li>3. Walk the talk of Simunye.</li> </ol>	Kobus Kobus Kobus	Ongoing Done Ongoing
Create a stable management (MD) environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>MD not withdraw suddenly, when it gets tough,</b></li> <li>2. <b>MD to remain on board for at least one year,</b></li> <li>3. <b>Management Team to remain stable and in place - develop rather leave</b></li> </ol>	Kobus Head office All	Ongoing Nov 2001 Ongoing
Practice friendliness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Smile more often</li> <li>2. Greet each other when we arrive at work, or walking through other people's space,</li> <li>3. Warm telephone techniques, especially our CLOs</li> </ol>	All All George	Ongoing Ongoing Nov
Coordinate and plan the development of people	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Appoint Human Potential Manager – Prudence.</b></li> <li>2. Table development programme.</li> </ol>	Kobus Prudence	Done Oct 30
Practice a "new" management style	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Coach and reflect Managers on their "new" management styles</b></li> <li>2. Develop the "new" styles by assimilating, reading, practicing.</li> <li>3. Walk the talk of Simunye</li> </ol>	Kobus Managers Managers	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Institute MD & Company questions and feedback forum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Call a staff Indaba and lunch on a Friday afternoon, once production has stopped.</b></li> <li>2. Schedule the next Indaba</li> </ol>	Prudence Prudence	Done Nov 9
Fostering pride - we provide community solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduce the "Amadoda" metaphor for our product – symbolism of strength, longevity</li> <li>2. Arrange product laying site visits for all our staff</li> </ol>	Kobus Jan	Done First =done
Practice care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assist with funeral transport, send wreaths and messages,</li> <li>2. Open the Company gate for easier access,</li> <li>3. Support HIV people,</li> <li>4. Help with ad hoc medical problems, until the clinic service is sorted,</li> <li>5. Be prepared to go the extra mile for our family (support Mr M until he is healed),</li> <li>6. Support the prosecution of Andries' murderers,</li> <li>7. Introduce Care Groups.</li> </ol>	Jan Bokkie Prudence Kobus All Prudence Prudence	Done Nov 1 Nov 22 Ongoing Ongoing Mar 2002 Jan 2002
Bring middle and upper management closer to each other	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invite Management to Team engage in a mature way with Middle Management – ask advise, consult, etc</li> <li>2. Invite Middle Management to participate in parts of Management breakaways.</li> </ol>	Kobus Kobus	Ongoing Done & ongoing
Reduce market embarrassment from lack of	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Re-establish care for the "baby Amadoda product" in manufacturing, stock yard, and delivery cycle,</li> </ol>	Julie & Jan	Ongoing

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quality	2. Introduce customer care principles and customer care training to the CLOs to improve service levels and improve market undertakings	George	Nov 30
Improve sales staff confidence	1. Fix quality problems, 2. Fix Service problems, 3. Sales Management support, and coaching, 4. Give "sales lions" recognition and maximum support from manufacturing, site service, technical backup etc 5. Solution sales training for sales staff and management.	Freddy Jan, Cas Kobus Julie, Cas Rob W	Feb 2002 Nov 30 Ongoing Ongoing ASAP
All leaders are facilitators	1.		

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