

**AN EXPLORATION OF PEER ADMINISTERED ACADEMIC  
DEPARTMENTS: TOWARDS AN INTERSUBJECTIVELY MINDFUL  
LEADERSHIP PARADIGM**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation, framed in modernity, examines the connections and interconnections of its externalities and their implications for one dynamic genre of Canadian post-secondary institutions: the special purpose teaching university (née, university college). In particular, the 'peer administered academic department,' typical of the flat organizational paradigm of the university college and its reliance on the inherent goodwill of peer administration in the design and delivery of programs, is explored. The distributed leadership of flat organizations manifested in peer administration both originates out of and is vulnerable to modernity's influences. In the horizontal organization, peer administration relies heavily on the goodwill, collaboration, and cooperation of its members. Hence, conditions and characteristics that endanger relationships, and thus the quality of collegiality, decisions and, ultimately, action, are the focus of a critique of presumptions of egalitarianism. Environments in which radical individualism prevails and rankism is permitted, in concert with modernity's externalities such as communications technologies, self-governance, and globalism directly impact flat organizations. Commonly held presumptions of democracy, the level playing field, the inclusiveness of Canadian pluralism, the benefits of technology, and the innate cooperation of individuals, are interrogated with a view to uncovering their impact on the peer administration model. Finally, a model of clear leadership is presented as a way of fostering goodwill, developing more effective leadership strategies, and improving the experience and effectiveness of members of peer administered academic departments.

## **DEDICATION**

To my ever-growing family for your unwavering faith. To Lorne, for more than I can ever say, and to Stefanie for your loving confidence in me and for the time you gave, although I really stole, to allow me to follow my dreams.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to convey heartfelt thanks for the graciousness and goodwill of my committee, the grace – for I know of no other word to describe such quality of character – of Heesoon Bai; for Bruce Beairsto’s ever-positive suggestions; and of Allan MacKinnon’s contribution to this project. I would also like to acknowledge the many educators, I have known, who have contributed in ways they will never know to my, and others’, successes.

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## PROLOGUE

As with most journeys, it is unearthing the unexpected, rather than fulfilling expectations, that is most gratifying. I have followed the path of anticipation and apprehension common to all expeditions, the delight in exploring the nooks-and-crannies of ideas beyond my own, and the pleasure of unexpected discovery. I have inserted myself into this project; while my imaginary – informed by my accountant ‘self’ – appreciates the instrumentalism of ‘getting the job done,’ this exploration has unwittingly engaged, as Bushe (2001) might say, my aware, descriptive, curious, and now-more-appreciative self, in making this project purposeful.

The purpose of this dissertation is to suggest a leadership model that contributes to the successful functioning of flat organizations. This undertaking is achieved by examining special purpose teaching university peer administered academic departments, of British Columbia (BC), as exemplar. By exploring their development and pressures to which special purpose teaching universities are vulnerable, a leadership paradigm is expected to emerge that contributes to the sustainability of flat organizations generally and to the energy and innovation demanded of their membership.

British Columbia’s university colleges, the locus of this enquiry, have simply ceased to exist, having been supplanted by a new model – the special

purpose teaching university<sup>1</sup>. In both Canada and the United States, the impact of new media have reverberated with citizens' collective voice, profoundly impacting federal politics; the global hyper-economy has reverted to global recession; and social networking, now legitimized, dominates much electronic communication. While this is not a study of change *per se*, the ubiquity of change ripples throughout, forming its backdrop, but not its focus; to say that much has changed since the beginning of this endeavour would be a significant understatement.

I began this project examining the working model that was the university college, since transformed into the special purpose teaching university. As such, I ask the reader's indulgence in considering their labels synonymous; the neophyte special purpose teaching university has not yet established its own character beyond the mechanics necessitated by its statutory founding and thus, in the near term, essentially represents a functional continuation of the university college model. My interest in educational leadership derives, as all interests do, from life experiences; mine in education as student, administrator, and teacher. To say that I am happy to be an educator would not do justice to the energy I derive from this role. I feel equally privileged to play that role in a newly minted special purpose teaching university; I am proud of my association with my institution, its wonderful students, and excellent colleagues. Special purpose

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<sup>1</sup> The term, special purpose teaching university, in this work is used without reference to the comma inserted in BC legislation usage in the University Act: Designation of Special Purpose, Teaching Universities (Regulation 220). The removal of the comma has been undertaken as a literary device; it is noted that this particular moniker is often incorrectly presented in the media, university websites, and the like.

teaching universities, born of modest community college origins, are vibrant and energetic places that provide rich experiences and contribute to full futures for our students.

Special purpose teaching universities have faced many challenges and continue to do so. This project reflects my concerns about some of the challenges that weigh heavily on their membership and, I fear, may exhaust their energy and thereby threaten the sustainability of these dynamic institutions. This work also reflects my hope that by exploring these challenges, a new leadership paradigm will emerge that more consciously considers inherent complexities, in order that they can be effectively addressed. Until an educational leader posed a complacency-shattering, seemingly trivial, question as to why I chose to teach in the 'K-Mart' of education<sup>2</sup>, I, like many others, merely followed the convention of our institutions, mutely chafing against perceptions of instrumentalism and dogma. The query, however, demanded a response, of which this project is a part. At its heart lies my intention to enhance understanding and further awareness in high functioning environments where, nonetheless, discourse, deliberation, reflection, and a sense of communion are viewed with suspicion, as if adopting a reflexive stance would somehow prove disruptive. In business, this way of knowing is common and has followed professionals to academe through professional and business programs. It is a rationalism I know well for, as an accountant turned educator, I too appreciate the efficiency and simplicity – the pragmatism – of instrumental reason. This project is my way of insinuating the

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<sup>2</sup> This comment was intended in the pejorative, referring to immense budget retailers of the day.

idea that modernity's complexities demand a more contemplative stance than that to which business professionals, educators, and leaders, at their nexus, are accustomed. I suggest that a more reflective way of knowing would benefit these dynamic educational institutions by showing the way a new leadership paradigm can better accommodate and, where necessary, mitigate, modernity's influence.

I suspect our modern, western, instrumental worldview – now also entrenched in many other parts of the world – in its extreme form contributes both to poor micro-level decisions by individual organizations and to broader macro-level disasters such as global financial upheavals occasioned by blind reliance on over-simplistic economic and financial models. Words like 'unprecedented' and 'unforeseen' are commonplace and, I find, superciliously out-of-place considering the ubiquity of change. In the Buddhist tradition, it is thought that much of humankind's suffering originates with the idea of permanence; I believe what we are witnessing today demonstrates this. My research brushes against these ideas; there is much yet to come and, with the passage of time, I am eager to know whether today's prescient whisperings of ideas, such as sovereign contraction rather global expansion – the antithesis of modernity – will come to pass in 'unprecedented' and 'unforeseen' future changes.

At this point in my continuing venture into discovery, wishing that our places of higher education, already functioning at a high level, might be elevated even further through thoughtfully determined and clearly articulated intentions,

I humbly offer this modest contribution to the growing discourse on leadership in higher education. I hope others will find this work an inspiration for their own endeavours and will cross as many bridges, and build many more.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### *introducing my research...*

This dissertation concerns organizational flattening<sup>3</sup>: the late 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon of organizations reducing bureaucratic layers and devolving responsibility to self-directed workers, which has occurred in many public and private institutions. The university college system of British Columbia (BC) represents the paradigmatic institutional realization of this phenomenon. I will explore the organizational flattening impacting the university college system of BC through the lens of modernity's externalities – forces from outside over which the organization has little or no control, such as demographic, political, or societal trends and economic, global, or technological transformations (Taylor, 2004). I will also examine human foibles in the context of BC's special purpose teaching university – the latest incarnation of what was originally a community college model. Modernity's pressures, in Taylor's sense of the western

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<sup>3</sup> To clarify the usage of the term, organizational flattening in this work, it refers to an organizational management paradigm and broader globalism in Friedman's sense: As observed by Friedman (2005), "today when individuals can easily access all the tools of collaborations and superempower themselves" is radically different from just a few years ago, when "we lived in a more centralized, and more vertically organized world" (Ibid, p. 443). "I introduced the idea that the world has gone from round to flat. Everywhere you turn, hierarchies are being challenged from below or transforming themselves from top-down structures into more horizontal and collaborative ones" (Ibid, p. 45). This flat world signifies shifts from hierarchy (vertical or tall) to collaborative (horizontal or flat) occurring globally, in governance paradigms, organizations, and society (Friedman, 2005), (Excerpt from Chapter 2). As I also refer extensively to Charles Taylor's work, I draw this to the attention of the reader, to distinguish the organizational structure of Friedman from Taylor's "flattened world, where the horizons of meaning become fainter" (Taylor, 1991, p. 69) to refer to the narrowing or trivialization of thoughts attending extreme personal freedom and choice; I refer to this phenomenon, later in this work, as 'narrow,' 'shallow,' or 'trivial'.

perspective<sup>4</sup>, on this particular institution have been extraordinary, as illustrated in the fact that the university college model has simply ceased to exist. I use the word ‘simply’ to denote the speed of the causative statutory repeal and amendment to provincial legislation that brought about their demise, and replacement in the form of the special purpose teaching university.

The flattening phenomenon, wherein organizations reduce bureaucratic layers and devolve responsibility to self-directed workers, is said to have emerged out of modernity (Friedman, 2005; Taylor, 2004). These intertwined concepts – hierarchical flattening and modernity – both reflect and further one another. Taylor’s view of modernity, which is introduced in this chapter and discussed further in Chapter Three, reflects the movement towards contemporary societal mores we now experience in Canada. These ideas – of Charles Taylor – should not necessarily be taken as a literal description of states of affairs; indeed, his analyses are contested in the literature and, as such, the reader is called upon, not to be converted to them, but to reflect upon them. The devolution of authority through organizational flattening, forming the focus of this work, is explicated throughout and is given particular attention in Chapter Two. With modernity’s movement towards hierarchical flattening, self-rule, direct-access, and individualism, western societies have been infused with new ways of looking at traditional hierarchies, imbibing concepts from diverse

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor is careful in not generalizing his ideas of modernity, or even globalism; he addresses his concern over doing so and not generalizing from the particular and thereby acknowledging “multiple modernities” (Taylor, 2007, p. 21). His emphasis is on the “West, or the North Atlantic world ... with the civilization whose principal roots lie in what used to be called ‘Latin Christendom’.” (p. 21)

worldviews. I warmly recall the idealism of the ‘me generation’ – the young ‘baby-boomers’ – embracing egalitarian alternatives to ‘tall’ hierarchical paradigms. Indeed, many high-functioning, purposeful organizations are flat, effectively fostering an environment in which resourceful employees are included, recognized, and empowered with authority commensurate with their responsibilities.

Ideally, these organizations epitomize community, with open and respectful communications and the freedom and safety to afford authentic dialogue in the pursuit of their common purpose. However, are, instead, often immersed in a reality far from the ideal imagined by a culture that speaks of collaboration and empowerment, central to the flattening model, but whose actions, motivated by its inherent efficiencies, serve to exploit, rather than empower, its membership. While we<sup>5</sup> readily embrace the ideal of devolved authority, it is often burdensome efficiency, rather than personal empowerment, that prevails. I suggest this phenomenon to be more widespread in flat organizations than commonly accepted, with many failing to live up to their promise. It is my intention to examine, through the lens of modernity, benefits and shortcomings of organizational flattening that may not be immediately

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<sup>5</sup> Here, ‘we’ refers to the Canadian context or, as Taylor explains—the western, North Atlantic worldview of which he writes. It is not my intention to suggest the mosaic that is Canada can be reduced to a single ‘we’. The literary use of ‘we’ is highly contextualized in this work and reflects my professional and personal observations, and those of other researchers, of broad patterns drawn from different experiences. The experiences of others are indeed different and therefore may be interpreted differently. Throughout this work, ‘we’ is to be taken in the context of the discussion at hand, for instance, referring at times to the ‘we’ in the post-secondary community; ‘we’ of the special purpose teaching university community; or, ‘we’ in peer administered academic departments.



apparent. By interrogating the character of the flat organization, and of the challenges borne by its constituents, I hope that a clearer understanding of its needs will emerge to inform leadership thinking.

Attending to the challenges and possibilities facing flat organizations will, I trust, expose reasons why some fail to live up to their full potential. I further hope that such understanding will form a platform from which to launch remedial leadership strategies to assist those struggling under the weight of modernity's and other's externalities. This research speaks to these challenges and possibilities, considers their origins, and looks to the promise of leadership clarity as a response to the difficulties faced by flat organizations generally, and peer administered academic departments specifically. The special purpose teaching university deserves further study, having been elevated from humble community college origins to university status in a mere generation. This new university model, like that of its worthy forbear, the university college, is considered unique, distinguishing itself from universities proper in its mandate, governance, and legislation, and short but eventful history, elaborated upon in Chapter Two. The phenomenal growth of these post-secondary institutions has not been painless; it is some of these institutional discomforts that are explored in the writing of this work. At a time when complacency pervades organizational thinking, I suggest (Chapter Five) a version of mindful and "clear leadership" (Bushe, 2001, p. 1) would benefit all stakeholders of flat organizations, whether in the business, education, medical, political, religious, or social community. It is my sincere hope that a clear and mindful leadership perspective will help them

come to appreciate the very best of their colleagues, their leaders, and those they serve.

*the scope of my research...*

I have embarked upon this enquiry, exploring the phenomenon of peer administration, with the objective of furthering discovery and dialogue, and informing leadership praxis. I have done so with the thoughts of Canadians in mind, as reflected in the discourse of the public sphere and trends of the day, and the contribution of contemporary Canadian thinkers. Charles Taylor<sup>6</sup> emphasizes the importance of philosophers communicating, “in a voice that enough people are interested in listening to” (Taylor, 2007) thereby drawing them into the discourse. Rather than looking for recommendations or solutions, Taylor suggests that people look to philosophers for “a direction of search” (Ibid). This hermeneutic journey has drawn me toward a direction of understanding my research topic through the exploration of pre-existing and emerging text – beyond traditional academic texts, to include “a document...social customs, cultural myths, and anything else containing a message that can be ‘read’” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 505). This reliance “on nonliving forms of data generally subsumed under the category of ‘texts’”

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Taylor, born in Montreal in 1931, is renowned on the world stage as an academic, scholar, writer, speaker, and politician. His most recent accomplishments include receiving the Templeton Prize for his work on spirituality and co-chairing the Quebec government commission mandated with an examination of Canadian/Quebec diversity issues and cultural accommodation. Charles Taylor’s status in contemporary philosophy reached new heights with his winning of the 2007 Templeton Prize, the first Canadian to do so. This prize, the largest such monetary award in the world - \$1.5 million, for Progress Toward Research or Discoveries About Spiritual Realities (Current Prize Winner, 2007) is considered by many to be ‘the Nobel Prize’ of spirituality.

(Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004, p. 303) brings authenticity and objectivity or “naturalness” (Ibid, p. 314): a counterpoint to phenomenological examinations in which individuals as research subjects, embedded in the particular culture and hegemony, unwittingly contribute experiential elements. The intellectual and practical discourse (text) of the day explored through the work of contemporary scholars, thinkers, and practitioners, historical and legislative documents, literature, and other media, have all contributed.<sup>7</sup> My ‘aware’ and ‘curious’ selves (Bushe, 2001) have undertaken a reflexive, mindful approach in this exploration, allowing the concepts and relationships contained in documents, literature, and varied texts, as well as my own experience, to reveal the “links and connections between objects that cannot speak, yet nevertheless bear messages” (Prior, 2004, p. 332).

*writing as a research method. . .*

Alexander (2002) – architect, author, mathematician, philosopher – made “observations, looked to see what worked, studied it, tried to distill out the essentials, and wrote them down” (p. 3): a simple, practicable description of hermeneutics, whereby one reflects, seeks to understand, and forms interpretations from and in text. Writing “*is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery*” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 967). According to Morgan (1997), writing is “a method for exploring the

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<sup>7</sup> I have favoured predominately Canadian authored, produced, edited, or presented text, with the intent of conveying some small part of what Canadians are writing, thinking, and saying. While I consider the here-and-now Canadian worldview to be relevant, to argue for or against a uniquely Canadian worldview is beyond this work’s scope.

multidimensional nature of organizations,” (p. 285) which generates “new insights and action possibilities” (Ibid) from multiple interpretations shaped by the author-reader:

I have used the ideas of ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ as metaphors for capturing the challenges of interpreting and shaping organizational life...This metaphorical frame has provided the basis for a hermeneutic school of social theory specializing in the art of interpretation (Morgan, 1997, p. 284).

The author-reader is immersed in the examination, and is drawn into the analyses – as I have been into the nuances and consequences of communication and decision-making practices in the absence of institutional hierarchy – and is mindfully engaged in its interpretations. By virtue of the circular relationship “the author and the reader are entangled in the interpretive processes” (Gall et al., 2003, p. 506). Writing and reflexivity is fundamental to encouraging qualitative research writers to “understand ourselves, reflexively” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 962). “Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of ‘science writing’ on our consciousness...writing is validated as a method of knowing” (Ibid), and although commonly applied to literary analysis, is increasingly being applied to educational research (Gall et al. 2003).

Reflexivity, “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210), is necessary to quality postmodern, poststructural qualitative research. In acknowledging the “conscious experience of the self as both inquirer and respondent,” I not only bring my voice, and thus my

worldview, to my research, but in doing so continue to create myself. This necessitates continually questioning how my “research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives” (Ibid). I have looked to the iterative framing and reframing of experiential interpretations and perceptions of Schön’s *reflective practice* (Morgan, 1997) and Gareth Morgan’s *imaginization* (Morgan, 1997). There are, therefore, autoethnographic elements in this project, as my voice is purposefully inserted into this work (Ibid). This reflexive stance involves teasing out the ideas of other researchers – those of Taylor, Bushe, Bai, and Henley, with which I strongly relate – and others, which I may not share, but which impart persuasive theories that bear consideration. While not intending to establish my own experiences as the ‘one’ or ‘true’ way, to incorporate the experiential is necessary to the character of reflexivity, into this work. Holman Jones (2005) emphasizes that:

weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation.... Making a text present.... Witnessing experience and testifying.... Believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to the change the world (p. 765).

An interrogation of reasoned or familiar beliefs and alternative viewpoints is one way to achieve deeper understanding. Rather than parochially favouring educational research, I have looked to broader worldviews in comparing, evaluating, and interpreting text, as have Stecher and Kirby’s (2004) interrogation of studies from various disciplines “to examine accountability in

other fields to find lessons that might be relevant for educators" (Stecher & Kirby, p. xiv). This exposure to the unfamiliar – learning from diverse models – cannot help but broaden one's "social imaginary"<sup>8</sup> (Taylor, 2004, p. 50) and contribute to clarity and mindfulness.

*research as situated practice. . .*

I have had many post-secondary roles; as student, administrator, and faculty member of peer administrated academic departments in all of the special purpose teaching university's incarnations, past and present, in BC's publicly funded college environs, and now in a special purpose teaching university, governed by BC's University Act. Being so immersed, and in my current capacity as a business educator, this research is framed in "situated practice" (McGibbon, 2000, p. 186) and incorporates the experiential. The dual role of situated knowledge<sup>9</sup> and role of enquirer in "situated practice" (Ibid) ensures my voice is "located deliberately and squarely in the text" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 210). This 'weaving' of the experiential, practical, and theoretical is, I believe, essential in chronicling and explicating the flattening phenomenon. In serving to inform educational leaders on the leadership implications of widely distributed

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor discusses the evolution of understanding of self and movement towards individualism. The social imaginary is "...the way we collectively imagine, even pretheoretically, our social life in the contemporary Western world." (Taylor, 2004, p. 50)

<sup>9</sup> Situated knowledge, a term coined by critical ethnographer Donna Haraway (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005), refers to sociological and educational qualitative researchers' recognition of "the self-positioning of the researcher, educator and practitioner" (McGibbon, 2000, p. 186).

authority<sup>10</sup>, associated with the “wider dispersion of power” (Bushe, 2001, p. 2) characteristic of empowered organizations, as opposed to those organizations devoid of empowerment that are merely flat, I explore flat organizations generally and, as exemplar, peer administered academic departments – the locus of my situated practice. The flattening phenomenon, within the context of the university college peer administered academic department, and modernity’s impact upon them, are explored through the lens of contemporary thinkers. I feel the exploration and sharing of findings to be an important contribution to the success of the flattening model; to ensure that it lives up to its principles and delivers on the promise of collaborative empowerment. The “ethos of caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff, and between staff and students, based on respect, trust, and shared power relations” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p.6) is paramount to the ‘happiness’ and ‘ingenuity’ (Homer-Dixon, 2000) of our institutions, characteristic of egalitarianism societies.

*a Canadian context. . .*

We<sup>5</sup> are proud of our Canadian sense of fairness and equanimity; we are also eminently practical, a quality that does not always serve us well. I consider our thinking to be generally instrumental, rather than contemplative, with impoverished decisions arising from a collective propensity to weigh important

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Distributed leadership’ is said to be ‘fluid,’ whereby leadership roles are variably conditional on individuals’ abilities, and particularly their capacity to exercise leadership when appropriate in the situational context (Mintzberg, 2006). Individual employees are empowered to take initiatives and, notably, have the authority to make and implement binding decisions. This differs significantly from traditional management, whereby the will of a few in power direct the actions of many subordinates (Excerpt from Chapter 5).

and insignificant matters equally or to embrace the simplistic, the obvious, and the tangible without reference to contextual subtleties, the immeasurable, or the ethereal. Our collective pragmatism might question: Since the flat organizational model persists, is efficient, and generates quality products and services, why does it require interrogation? Why examine the internal workings of an inherently cooperative model in the age of individualism and egalitarianism, particularly in pluralistic Canada? If given only one opportunity to respond, mine would be: to unsettle complacency – a characteristic that is often equated with being Canadian. The pragmatic collective, in response, might argue the futility and irrelevance of deliberating egalitarianism and democracy, issues better relegated to the discipline of philosophy than organizational leadership. I, and others, often encounter this line of reason and endure its irony. It has been my experience that the ideal of collaborative empowerment is frequently remiss in peer administered academic departments – exemplars of organizational flattening in BC's publicly funded college environs<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The term 'publicly funded college' in B.C., after 1988, includes university colleges. In B.C., colleges and university colleges shared provincial governance legislation, The College and Institute Act, until 2008 when applicable sections were repealed and the University Act amended reintroducing them as special purpose, teaching universities.



BC's special purpose teaching universities have only recently evolved, originating from modest beginnings as community colleges<sup>12</sup>; their status of comprehensive universities emerging by virtue of provincial legislation amending both the University Act and the College and Institute Act. Demands for skilled and educated workers, through eras of dynamic change, reverberate throughout BC's history. In response to public pressure to address these demands, the province established community colleges in the 1960s. These publicly funded institutions provided two distinctive educational streams: trades and vocational, and first and 2<sup>nd</sup> year academic courses eligible for university transfer. Under similar circumstances in the 1980s, the university college, "a relatively unique educational structure within the Canadian educational system" (Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs, 2006)<sup>13</sup> was created. Provincial legislative amendments re-shaping university colleges as comprehensive undergraduate universities expanded publicly funded college system program delivery to include baccalaureate degrees, and later, to offer a master's degree curriculum. The latest transformation, in 2008, occurred again while under the throes of workforce shortages and transformational advances in

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<sup>12</sup> In the early years of community colleges situated in suburbia, local residents feared the impact of these institutions and the 'type' of people they would attract, illustrative of zeitgeist concerns over the quality of community colleges in comparison to the university proper. Remnants of such thinking, I suspect, may still exist in university-proper elitism, hence the 'K-Mart of education' comment. As early as 1978, the master of ceremonies of Douglas College's convocation ceremonies shared that community colleges were, in fact, found to increase local residential property values and that neighbouring residents were extremely supportive.

<sup>13</sup> From the Executive Summary Introduction (paragraph 1) to the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs' (ACBSP) assessment of the School of Business, Kwantlen University College. The ACBSP Feedback Report – October 22, 2006, was based on several criteria, including an accreditation team field evaluation.

technology and communications. All of BC's university colleges, one college, and one institute, transitioned into regional universities, known as special purpose teaching universities. University colleges' successes, the quality of their programs and their popular support may, ironically, lead to unfounded confidence in government largesse and enlightened leadership, as these institutions continued to expand, were embraced by the public, and developed reputations for excellent standards of education. However, stakeholders continue to experience the unintended adverse consequences of legislative authority, imposed without consultation or recourse, that reverberates deeply throughout institutions long thereafter.

The effects of pressures exerted by such externalities upon university colleges has lingered. While there is considerable scholarly and practicable literature on organizational behaviour, design, and leadership, little attention has been paid to the nature and role of university college's management of their academic departments, particularly of peer administration. Thus, opening up this area to exploration will inform future discourse, and one hopes, precipitate mindful action. An understanding of the character of the peer administration model, the development of flat organizations generally and special purpose teaching universities specifically, and the pressures to which they are exposed, are fundamental in addressing their leadership needs. In Chapter Two, recognizing that "the past will be constituted in the present" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 383), I will examine the development of the special purpose teaching

university, its peer administered academic department functions, the leadership role of academic deans and faculty peers, the efficacy of peer administration and its impact on the educational community, and the general trend towards organizational flattening.

*peer administration, flat organization, and modernity's externalities...*

The term *peer administration* is given a stipulative definition<sup>14</sup>, referring to an organizational environment in which there is little hierarchy – colloquially referred to as ‘flat’ or ‘horizontal’ – and consequently administrative functions traditionally directed, performed, and implemented by management and administrative staff, with the support of clerical staff, have devolved to employee peers. A similar term, *peer-to-peer administration*, and occasionally the term, *peer administration*, is used in computer technology and science, referring to network applications in which an online community of peers is created and supported by computer networks to improve research through participation and sharing<sup>15</sup>.

Ideas of self-direction and recognition of the individual, central to the peer administration and similar contemporary organizational models, characterize aspects of modernity. Taylor (2004) describes modernity as:

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<sup>14</sup> The term, stipulative definition (Conrad & Serlin, 2006) is given to a particular word/term, used in this dissertation, in a specific – a stipulated – context regardless of its common usage. According to Philips (Conrad & Serlin), using a stipulated definition is an appropriate linguistic tool providing the reader is made aware of its particular assigned meaning.

<sup>15</sup> There are few references to the term ‘peer administration’ generally. The term, peer administration, is used differently in the health-care arena, wherein it is used extensively in reference to peer administered medication, for example, addicted individuals administering drugs to other addicts.

that historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization); of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality); and new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution (p. 1).

Modernity's influence has both benefited and challenged university colleges, from growth due to mobility and globalism, to technological and communications advances. To add to the complexity, these institutions are subject to funding and legislative policies of the provincial government, which, paradoxically, governs their very existence and yet demands they self-manage (Levin, 1999). Special purpose teaching universities, recently evolved from the university college model, remain dependent on the expertise and efficiency of faculty administered academic departments inherited from their university college forebears. These peer administered academic departments, central to their institutions' success, are also often a source of discord as their members struggle to keep up with increasing demands. Modernity's influence, reverberating throughout these institutions, is clearly discernable in the quality of relationships amongst faculty members, and between faculty and their deans. At times, it appears as if a battle is waging between the forces of radical individualism<sup>16</sup> and the good of the ever-more-narrowly-defined community. The professional capabilities of faculty colleagues are unquestionable, yet a pervasive 'stay out of my sandbox' attitude reflects, in my opinion, a profound

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<sup>16</sup> Taylor explains his use of the word 'radical, explaining in *Sources of the Self*, for instance when referring to *radical reflexivity*, "[the] stance becomes radical (this is a term of art I want to introduce here) when what matters to us is the adoption of the first-person standpoint" (Taylor, 1989, p. 130).

incongruity between their role as engaged educators and a pervasive sense of instrumentalism. It appears that radical individualism and instrumentalism are manifested in petty protectionism of a 'sandbox' intended to serve our students, over which we claim no ownership and inhabit only momentarily, like children protecting sandcastles only to abandon them to the waves (Renard, 1999), illustrative of modernity's influence over individuals' behaviour.

Taylor (2004) explores modernity's externalities: changes wrought by globalism, mobility, radical individualism, free markets, and the breakdown of hierarchies, and advances in communications and technology; pressures to which we, and our organizations, must necessarily respond. Such dynamism, while providing opportunities for growth and innovation, exerts extraordinary demands on individuals and institutions to adapt. Taylor's thinking informs my exploration of modernity's reach into BC's special purpose teaching university environs – the locus of this enquiry. Modernity's externalities in some way affect all organizations and individuals who, subjected to the stresses of our times, look to enlightened leadership in a contemporary horizon of unprecedented change. Instead, many are subjected to impoverished leadership, unable or unwilling to set the 'tone-at-the-top' in ways that mitigate, rather than contribute to modernity's pressures. Leaders, choosing organizational flattening as a strategy to cope with demands for increased efficiency have simplistically eliminated, rather than attempting to elevate, their membership.

I challenge suggestions that merely eliminating management 'layers' empowers workers and that mindful cooperation emerges organically. In the

absence of institutionalized hierarchy, disempowering behaviours are likely to emerge as workers become overwhelmed by responsibility: or, more insidiously, they are perpetuated by self-serving individuals thriving in a leadership void. All around us we hear of workers disheartened by mounting expectations imposed on them without consultation or recourse. Job titles and remuneration remain static while downloaded tasks, attributable to horizontal restructuring, increase. It is apparent, in the preponderance of myopic management, that there are leaders who either underestimate, or are oblivious to, modernity's encroachment upon their sphere of influence. Today's leaders, raised and educated in the throes of modernity and now experiencing its fallout, appear to be struggling, managing organizations with familiar management tools long after their value has diminished in an era where 'everything' has changed. Without insight into modernity's complexity, individuals and organizations alike become increasingly vulnerable to its vagaries. It is my hope that an exploration of the impact exerted by modernity's externalities will show how to conceive a different leadership paradigm.

*the implication of paradigm shifts. . .*

Throughout the ages, people have acculturated particular ideologies only to have them suddenly rejected and reconstructed, hence the term *paradigm shift*. Paradigm changes generally "occur in discontinuous, revolutionary breaks called 'paradigm shifts'" (Capra, 1997, p. 5). Borrowing from Kuhn's definition of a

“scientific paradigm” (as cited in Capra, p. 6), Capra employs the concept of a “social paradigm” (Ibid):

... a constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself” (Capra, 1997, p. 6)

Social paradigm shifts create a “broader cultural crisis” (Capra, 1997, p. 5) claims Capra, in describing how long-held western beliefs are being transformed or eroded as citizens broaden their worldview. He observes that small changes in non-linear systems can prove highly effective in leveraging change; it is hoped some such impetus emerges from this research. By broadening their worldview, thereby seeing reality through a richer and more productive social paradigm than that behind mainstream leadership, perhaps leaders can be coaxed out of complacency with respect to modernity’s pressures on their institutions and their membership, to recognize and address modernity’s toll on the community.

I have observed educational leaders, grappling with difficult issues, applying outmoded strategies, with the best of intentions, to motivate personnel and move their organizations forward. It seems today, the paradigmatic management response to external pressures is becoming increasingly focused on efficiency and predictable in its predilection for reorganizing and downsizing. More innovative leadership is required, yet is unlikely to emerge without a clear understanding of modernity’s pressures and the idiosyncrasies of organizational flattening. Major paradigm shifts favouring hierarchical devolution of power, in

collaborative administrative models, necessitate equally significant shifts in leadership style.

*turning problem into promise. . .*

As the trend towards organizational flattening appears both pervasive and persistent (Bushe, 2001), a deep understanding of distributed authority is essential. I endeavour to describe the character of organizational flattening through the lens of the special purpose university peer administered academic department, as an exemplar of horizontal administration. Special purpose teaching universities and their forebears, in the form of university colleges and community colleges, have proven particularly vulnerable to externalities ranging from political manoeuvring to global competition. Paradoxically, modernity's challenges also proffer great promise. Consider the rich potential of collaborative, innovative, empowered individualists in these high functioning institutions, described by Kouba as the "only real competitive advantage in today's rapidly changing world" (Kouba, 2007, p. EN8). It remains to be seen how the special purpose teaching university model will fare in the future.

I suggest that a deeper understanding of the roles of those in such organizations, in ways that permit expressions of individual feelings and enable respectful discourse, will allow mindful leadership to emerge. It is generally accepted that, in this age of profound and rapid change, creativity and innovation are crucial to growth, survival even. To this end, many organizations have strategically implemented, while others have organically evolved, flatter



management systems. However, merely executing horizontality without understanding the underlying intentions and consequences is likely to create havoc rather than harmony. My colleagues and I have observed the façade of leadership descend into benign abandon as high functioning peer administered departments fragment for want of leadership. It has been my experience that much of the good generated by collaborative models arises from members' goodwill, despite executive inattention. If this speculation holds, then it is incumbent on leaders to foster environments in which goodwill flourishes. But how are academic leaders, do this? I believe that an understanding of one's 'social imaginary', and that of others,' (Taylor, 2004) is essential.

*social imaginaries applied. . .*

In considering our practice, we tend to immediately visualize the 'doing,' the 'working at' particular tasks, without conscious reference to one's values, as if we could begin the 'doing' immediately, by fiat, without first changing our values and beliefs. To shy away from addressing changing values and beliefs is understandably human; the process behind such changes being difficult, complex, often tenuous, and time-consuming. But those who study social change have deep understandings into how change occurs; I look to Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, introduced above, for such insights. Values and beliefs are embedded, as Taylor (2004) shows us, in one's social imaginary, influencing actions, beliefs, and conduct; they are, therefore, important elements of professional practice and organizational ingenuity. I will be exploring the

nuances of how our worldview shapes our institutions more deeply in Chapter Three; for now, this quick reference will foreshadow what is to come.

We are all experientially shaped by culture, heritage, and socialization — our own idiosyncratic social imaginary which, Taylor (2004) concludes, is “not a set of ‘ideas’; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practice of a society” (p. 2). I am not alone in thinking, for Taylor has long before articulated the same, that the western worldview — the tendency to rationalize and objectify rather than contemplate<sup>17</sup> — has contributed to impoverished thinking and decision making. It is said that what we ‘think about’ drives our actions, and thus both results in and derives from our social imaginary. It is this idea that compels me to consider the implications for our institutions. I suggest it is time to broaden our understanding of what it takes to be ‘aware’ in order that the collective ‘we’ realistically assess and address modernity’s pressures on our organizations and their members. I have done so by reaching into a contemporary theory in the form of Bushe’s (2001) *clear leadership* to which I look for its emphasis on awareness and clarity, and the respectful discourse and inclusion that derives from it. To build upon clear leadership, I look to Henley (2006) and Thornton (2007) to buttress ‘skills’ on which clear leadership draw

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<sup>17</sup> Ellen Langer, Harvard psychology professor and winner of the Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology (American Psychology Association) (Langer, 1989, p. 234), studies the effect of “mindfulness, and of its counterpart, the equally powerful but destructive state of mindlessness.” (p. 1). Neither Langer nor I are Buddhist scholars, yet we recognize the parallels drawn from markedly different worldviews. Langer describes the rigid, narrow, and automatic responses, rooted in ‘outcome’, rather than ‘process’ mindlessness pervasive in western institutions and the human capacity to categorize ‘things’—from personal appearance to complex ideologies—and hold on to those images even in the face of contrary or new information.

and, hopefully, become incorporated into organizational ethos. My search is for ways through which we may be less susceptible to collective unconscious drivers, our social imaginary as Taylor might say or Capra's social paradigm, and more receptive to a broader and deeper consciousness of ourselves and others, our surroundings, and their interconnectedness – a “new view of reality as it truly is” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 37). This exploration has led me through contemplating what it is to be aware, explicated below, to draw on clear leadership as a mindful leadership paradigm, well suited to flat organizations.

*introducing clear leadership...*

Throughout this project, I liberally refer to being ‘mindful’<sup>18</sup>, for I believe it captures the awareness of perspectives, options, and ideas – the unencumbered, un-obfuscated perspicacity of Bushe's ‘clarity’ (2001). Mindful leadership, in my view and in a contemporary sense, emerges from awareness, broadened perspectives, and openness to ubiquitous change, resting on a foundation of awareness and reflection – a true understanding and acceptance of reality. This appreciation of people and things as they are, not valued according to their instrumental utility, which is often missing from our own contemporary

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Mindfulness’ is drawn from the Buddhist tradition; Harvard scholar and St. Louis University professor, John Renard, describes right mindfulness as a “reflection on the deeper meaning of the Four Truths” (Renard, 1999, p. 45). The Four Noble Truths, which form the “major doctrinal thesis” (Ibid) of Buddhism, iteratively directs one towards incorporating, reflecting upon, and follow the Noble Eightfold Path, of which mindfulness is an integral feature in achieving concentration through one's awareness of reality. The Four Noble Truths centre on human suffering, caused by ‘craving’—“... the desire for independence and individuality...” (Ibid), and mistaken belief in the permanence of things and people. “Craving or grasping here means all inappropriate, obsessive gotta-have-it (or, for that matter, I'll-do-anything-to-avoid-it) motivation” (Ibid), which parallels Taylor's trivial version of the ethic of authenticity explored in Chapter Three. Throughout this journey, I have been both comforted and disquieted at the profound parallels between ancient and contemporary thinking; comforted in their wisdom, yet disquieted by our capacity to disregard them.

social imaginary, reverberates through Bushe's ideas of 'interpersonal clarity', to be achieved by sharing 'intersubjective truths' (Bushe, 2001). The aggregation of collective goodwill and mutual understanding that arises out of shared 'subjectivity' or 'intersubjectivity' is described by Bai (2001) as "the process of mutual sharing of thoughts, perceptions, values, and attitudes" (Ibid, p. 311). In sharing their subjective truth individuals become connected and receptive to each other's dissimilar ideas, thereby establishing understanding and clarity in which authentic discourse flourishes. It is this capacity to clearly communicate and deliberate ideas that is central, for instance, to the democratic practice of decision making in peer administered academic departments. This idea of democracy *in situ* "is fundamentally this practise of intersubjectivity" (Ibid). These ways of knowing originate from different worldviews than conventionally accepted in western culture, and can play a critical role in the quality of human existence. Lastly, I would like to suggest that this interpretive, reflective enquiry itself is conceptually mindful in that I am moving beyond my experiences to contemplate, free of instrumentalism, ideas, knowledge, and observations in the quest for deep understanding of the matter at hand, a more contemplative thinking. To this end, I have co-opted the term 'mindfulness' to articulate the clarity of perception central to this work and to clear leadership; this way of knowing has, in seeking out a perspicacious way of leadership, led me to appreciate the works of contemporary Canadian thinkers, such as Bai (2001), Bushe (2001/2004), Henley (2006), and Taylor (1989/1991/1992/2004/2007).

The parallels between mindfulness, Bushe's clear leadership, and Henley's (2006) distributed leadership approach have led me to believe that a clear and mindful perspective on leadership holds great promise for flat organizations, particularly in the college environs wherein leaders are tumbled about by modernity's externalities and desperately need clarity of communication and perceptions. One might question how such leadership philosophies, as above, can co-exist with the radical individualism, relativism, consumerism, globalism, and other the 'isms' of modernity. This question is explored in greater depth in Chapters Three and Four. I suggest that "[k]nowing your experience means knowing what you observe, think, feel, and want" (Bushe, 2001, p. 116) and that incorporating, what Bushe calls 'skills' rather than qualities of, "self-awareness, descriptiveness, curiosity, and appreciation" (p. 11) would be effective antidote to modernity's pressures. They are explored further, as a practicable model for educational leaders in Chapter Five, with a view to incorporating awareness into a leadership paradigm appropriate to special purpose teaching universities' challenges.

Much has changed in the publicly funded college environs – legislative amendments, funding, growth, technological advancements, and the demand for program expansion in an increasingly competitive environment – but the flat administrative model of academic departments has remained. This has left faculty, in the role of department administrators<sup>19</sup>, generally to their own

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<sup>19</sup> I have intentionally used the term 'role', as in 'playing the role', to denote the depth and breadth of faculty's administrative responsibilities, undertaken without due recognition.

devices – inadequately resourced and bereft of management’s cushion, struggling under the weight of imposed expectations. I suggest leadership complacency and followership resistance contribute to the failure of many flat organizations to live up to their promise. Having observed the consequences, including a breakdown in the sense of community, I am driven to seek solutions in the form of practicable and effective leadership strategies. In my view, the ancient tradition of mindfulness parallels, and thereby reinforces modern clear leadership philosophy, thus serving as a powerful reminder that experientially all humans are vulnerable to the expectations of their worldview – awareness and clarity are, indeed, much needed. I strove to seek out contemporary, Canadian parallels to ancient wisdoms that could speak to the challenges faced by peer administered academic departments. To this end, I respectfully take leave of the ancients, looking to the future promise of clear leadership as an effective approach to mitigating commonly held beliefs that diminish the goodwill, collaboration, and innovation that is vital to flat organizations. I also explore the nuances of the aforementioned ‘commonly held’ convictions and their accompanying behaviours, which serve to denigrate the high ideals expected of higher education, subsumed under the characterization of ‘rankism’. To these ends, I suggest a version of clear leadership that I call ‘clear and mindful leadership’ as a promising leadership paradigm that honours the spirit of egalitarianism, rather than efficiency, in facing up to modernity’s challenges.

*in summary...*

This chapter – Chapter One – has introduced the relevant practical and theoretical constructs furthered in this research. The character and origins of peer administered academic departments and the newly minted special purpose teaching university are examined in the following Chapter Two. A deeper understanding of their ‘personality’ – history, relationships, and values, equally attributable to organizations as to people – is anticipated by examining the challenges mounted by modernity’s externalities. In Chapter Three, modernity’s fallout frames an exploration of radical individualism, democratic practice, and technology’s influence on flat organizations. The prevalence of ‘rankism’ (Fuller, 2003) – a proxy for many of the profoundly negative ‘isms’ in our society and organizations – the nuances of which may not be immediately obvious, yet powerfully influence the community, is explored in Chapter Four. Through mindful interpretation of modernity’s pressures that reverberate through peer-administrated departments, a fitting leadership model will, I believe, emerge. The possibilities proffered by clear and mindful leadership, as an effective channel in fostering mindful leadership and cultivating relationships in this environment, are explored in Chapter Five. The purpose of this research is to suggest practicable leadership philosophies and strategies that are firmly rooted in clarity, inclusiveness, awareness, caring, and respect: thereby, robust, sustainable, and ultimately effective.

## CHAPTER 2 EXAMINATION OF THE FLATTENING PHENOMENON

This chapter will explore aspects of flat organizations generally, and university colleges in particular. Modernity's<sup>20</sup> intrusion into the everyday lives of Canadians and the organizations to which they belong, and technologically driven, socio-economic and political externalities, are viewed through the lens of the flat configuration of academic departments in the publicly funded BC college environs – the locus of my situated practice for the best of two decades. This chapter will provide a base for further exploration of modernity's role in their challenges, to be undertaken in Chapter Three, by describing the form and function of peer administered academic departments, the transition to special purpose teaching universities, and how the flattening phenomenon, and other of modernity's influences, informs them.

*the flattening phenomenon. . .*

Modernity's externalities enable, and in turn are reinforced by, organizational flattening. Today, we enjoy extraordinary access to information and communications in the public sphere, enabling unprecedented individual independence; at times, encumbering us with extraordinary responsibility. As

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<sup>20</sup> In this paper, Taylor's definition of modernity is applied: "...that historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization); of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality); and new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution)" (Taylor, 2004, p. 1).



observed by Friedman<sup>21</sup> (2005), “today when individuals can easily access all the tools of collaboration and superempower themselves” is radically different from just a few years ago, when “we lived in a more centralized, and more vertically organized world” (p. 443):

I introduced the idea that the world has gone from round to flat. Everywhere you turn, hierarchies are being challenged from below or transforming themselves from top-down structures into more horizontal and collaborative ones (Friedman, 2005, p. 45).

This flat world is marked by shifts from hierarchical (vertical or tall) to collaborative (horizontal or flat) structures that are occurring globally, in governance paradigms, organizations, and society (Friedman, 2005). In Friedman’s view, flattening occurs in response to technological advances – particularly in communications – and the economic opportunities and demands that arise from globalism. Taylor (2004) describes flattening hierarchies in his exploration of the “direct-access society” (Ibid, p. 157), wherein each of society’s members is “immediate to the whole” (Ibid) – every person is the same distance from the centre. This, idiomatically referred to as decentralization or flattening, is characterized by the radical horizontality of western modernity (Ibid).

Regardless of one’s theoretical leaning, towards technological-economics or sociological-egalitarianism driving organizational flattening, the phenomenon signals a paradigm shift to a higher plane of connection and inter-relatedness. It is the readiness with which such institutional and intersubjective communion is

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Friedman is a Pulitzer Prize winner and renowned writer on globalization, economics, politics, and organizational structure; he coined the phrase, *the world is flat*.

disregarded, in favour of flattening's inherent economic efficiencies, that informs much of my exploration.

All organizations, including institutions of higher learning, are subject to the vagaries of demographic, economic, political, social, and technological change. Externalities, over which they have little control, dramatically impacted university colleges in "an increasingly complex, technologically sophisticated, and globally interactive world" (Faculty Structure Task Force, 2006, p. 9). Trends favouring horizontal over vertical organization, fuelled by the competitive fallout of globalization, and what I call modernity's stealth, affect all Canadian organizations to some degree:

Everywhere we look in business we see the breakdown of tall hierarchies, the use of teams, the reorganization of functional departments into cross-functional groups, and the reduction of centralized control, allowing more local autonomy (Bushe, 2001, p. 1).

This is indeed evident in the form and function of the peer administered academic department.

*demands of the flattening paradigm. . .*

While much is made of its egalitarianism, in reality many consider organizational flattening to be primarily a cost-saving device. This is demonstrated, for example, in the downsizing of Canadian organizations in response to global trends reflected in increased competition, mobility, and market volatility of commodities, currency, and securities. It is generally thought

that organizational flattening organically leads to empowerment, yet merely flattening the bureaucracy will not automatically translate into empowerment and may, in reality, be devoid of authentic cooperation and deliberation.

Empowerment is not achieved by the instrumentalism of simply adopting a flatter organizational chart. Doing so to expedite efficiency is exploitative, rather than empowering, and rarely conducive to authentic collaboration. Rather, cost savings and flexibility are lost to the shadow side of interpersonal and practice dynamics, which comprise all organizations' systems. It is my observation that benefits accruing to flat organizations derive more from the attendant goodwill of their members than from organizational structure. If this is indeed the case, employees' well-being and sense of inclusion is paramount and deserves attention.

Organizational flattening is insinuating itself beyond the boundaries of individual institutions, forging changes in the way we manage our organizations, and thus ourselves, and communicate with each other. That the traditional command and control management style no longer meets contemporary demands for speed and flexibility is becoming obvious. Leaders, I suggest, eager to take credit for their organizations' successes, often fail to recognize the implications of their policies for individual members and the broader community. Individuals, and the organizations they serve, not attuned to the evolving environment in which they are immersed, are particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of dynamic change, making mindfulness crucial at a

time when the skill, flexibility, and the energy of aware and innovative personnel are crucial (Kouba, 2007).

Along with globalism's challenges and opportunities, technological advances permit sharing, storing, and communicating vast amounts of data, previously impossible or limited to the privileged, changing the way we use information, organize, govern, and communicate with each other. However, innovation cannot merely be conjured up; awareness is requisite to innovation, with both likely to emerge in environments rich in authenticity, collaboration and deliberation – qualities leaders need to support. Pronouncing an organization to be innovative does not make it so and may indeed serve as a brake rather than engine of its advancement. When leaders recognize and appreciate the significance of obstacles to human contributions, those for instance we subsume under the category of 'innovation,' then such 'brakes' can be effectively relieved. I suggest it is primarily an issue of awareness, rather than simply a lack of innovation, which demands our attention; certainly our leaders should be attuned to this phenomenon.

### *ubiquitous isolation...*

Contemporary leaders – no longer referred to as managers – extol the benefits of empowered employees by conferring upon them autonomy and responsibility. Focusing on the objectives (outcomes), the means (processes) appear secondary; the practice of establishing broad organizational objectives, leaving the minutiae associated with their implementation to employees, peer

administrators, or teams for implementation is considered progressive. With little resemblance to a traditional hierarchy, leaders at the apex (difficult to visualize in a flat organization, yet very real) represented by boards of governors, education councils or senates in special purpose teaching universities, delegate responsibility for organizational initiatives to deans who in turn relegate their implementation to the milieu of peer administered academic departments – faculty. Unanticipated in this paradigm are the consequences of increasing isolation at all levels – executive, deans, faculty, and staff – exacerbated by outsourcing and technology-based communications. Managers (academic deans included) are effectively removed from the day-to-day realization of goals instituted by higher order, becoming increasingly unable, unaware, or unwilling to participate. That such downloading is far from empowering is not lost on faculty peers who, sensitive to the irony, ‘assume’ increasingly demanding roles. In 1972, Jacob Siegel, then of University of Toronto’s School of Business, and University of California’s Edwin Ghiselli examined differences between tall and flat organizations, particularly the autonomy, isolation, and seemingly limitless responsibilities of managers in flat organizations:

He [the manager] finds himself relatively isolated from his immediate superior, not in the sense that the superior is remote, but rather in the sense that the superior has so very many subordinates that he cannot give each of them a great deal of personal attention. As a consequence, to a considerable extent, he must necessarily depend upon his own resources. Furthermore, that manager himself is in a similar position, for he, too, has a large number of subordinates whose actions and whose operations he must control and for which he is responsible (as cited in Ghiselli & Siegel, 1972, p. 622).

No wonder leaders revert to the familiar, short-term, efficiency of top-down bureaucracy or abrogate responsibility within a framework of devolution, under the guise of empowerment. Yet, it seems deans and faculty alike are subject to the ubiquity of isolation in an organizational structure that celebrates individual contribution on one hand, but fails to support it with the other. Individuals, insular in their personal sentiments of frustration arising out of overwhelming pressures, further exacerbate tensions by their failure to consider others' reality – the pressures to which we are all exposed. Flat organizations are equally challenging for employees who, subjected to high expectations, have limited authority or direction and few avenues for complaint, conflict resolution, problem solving, or even sharing ideas. Conduits for communication are generally scarce, with remote management isolated from daily proceedings in what, at times I suspect, signals escape from overwhelming demands. This manifests in many guises; for instance, in the form of leaders reluctant to

'interfere' when conflict or difficulties arise, or inaction excused by deflecting responsibility to the jurisdictional accountability of bureaucrats and budgets, unions and faculty associations. Rejecting culpability 'in deference' to other officials, particularly unions, appears a widely employed and effective avoidance strategy – a leadership void enabled by the lack of bureaucracy. While an intensive examination of unions is beyond the scope of this research, colleges and special purpose teaching universities are home to multiple unions and faculty associations, therefore warranting a limited exploration of their influence.

University of British Columbia (UBC) professor emeritus for Sauder School of Business, Mark Thompson, observes that, while “[c]ollective bargaining is our form of workplace democracy...[l]ittle attention is directed at the aspirations, frustrations, satisfactions or fears of workers represented in bargaining” (Thompson, 2007, p. A11), to the detriment of the community in addition to that of the individual. Renihan (1985) explicates the fundamentals underlying institution-union conflict. Underlying Renihan’s work is an understanding that, under the conditions of union negotiation, cooperation between parties may be learned and that conflict is normal in any system or organization: “any view of society and especially any view of social change which does not concern itself with conflict phenomena is seriously deficient” (Renihan, 1985, p. 43). The ‘problem’ of conflict emerges, not with its absolute presence, but in its avoidance; a phenomenon particularly relevant in collaborative organizations, as denying its existence in itself reflects unstable relationships: “hostile feelings generated within a relationship are more likely to

be expressed if the parties are aware of the stability of the relationship” (Ibid, p. 47). Renihan concludes that opportunities for dialogue and knowledge of process are essential to the deliberation required for successful bargaining. Both conditions are in short supply in the college environs; ignorance of the process, in concert with derisive attitudes toward authentic deliberation prevails. Prospects for building relationships by which to strengthen the bargaining system are thereby limited; so too, the ideal of empowerment, reflecting general conditions throughout organizations. The perception of problematic unionized communities represents a ubiquitously negative line of reasoning, which I would like to see challenged in future research, especially given the fact that unionization can enhance, rather than hinder, innovation<sup>22</sup> (Statistics Canada, 2003). These complexities are played out systemically in special purpose teaching universities; with their leadership endeavouring to manage multifarious pressures without, I suggest, understanding modernity’s strain on the collective energy of their communities.

*special purpose teaching universities...*

Taylor (1991) elaborates on transformations wrought by modernity, such as the advancement of the public sphere, the breakdown of social and institutional hierarchy, the ‘equalization’ of people fuelling the movement from

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<sup>22</sup> Industry Canada and Human Resources Development Canada’s 2003 study, *Empowering employees: A route to innovation* (Statistics Canada, 2003) finds that, contrary to conventional belief, unionized workforces may be remarkably innovative. Unionized environments are indeed challenging, yet this study concludes unionization can enhance, rather than hinder, innovation. Leaders, including deans, should consider challenging conventional notions of union obstructivism as obstacles to innovation.



hierarchy to self-rule, and the systemic horizontalization of institutions. In the 21st century, the public sphere is played out in a sophisticated framework of global electronic media and communication technologies, which are exhibited in the structure and program models of special purpose teaching universities. These characteristics are also reflected in Canada's egalitarian society; individuals have direct access to commodities, information, the courts and government, referred to by Taylor, in reference to broader society as the "decentred view" (Taylor, 2004, p. 157), and to which I refer in the immediate sense as decentralization or flattening. In Canada, post-secondary education is less centralized than other Commonwealth countries, with provincial and territorial ministries presiding over advanced education, whereas Australia and the United Kingdom, for instance, regulate post-secondary systems federally. Further governance variations arise in individual institutions and their prescriptive legislation. This model has as many detractors as supporters; some of the former's claims are addressed in this chapter. The latter point to its flexibility and achievements culminating in the development of BC's special purpose teaching universities from early community college origins. The character of such institutions and their flat academic departments is central to understanding how best they may be managed; hence my foray into the origins of the special purpose teaching university from its beginnings as a community college<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Taylor, in *The Malaise of Modernity* (Taylor, 1991), underscores connections between past and present; to understand the character of today's organizations we look to their origins, their development and phenomenological community.

Publicly funded colleges<sup>24</sup> are said to reach deep into the social fabric of Canadian communities “in human resource development and in contributing to the economic, social, and political development of Canada” (Levin, 2003, p. 448) as a result of their unique character. University colleges, as part of the publicly funded college system inherited these same characteristics: “While university colleges do imitate parts of higher status institutions ... they also retain connections with their past through their community college mission” (Ibid, p. 463). University colleges “resemble universities with their new emphasis upon research and scholarship, academic rank, and applications for membership into a national association for universities” (Ibid, p. 455); yet retain their community college roots “founded upon ideals of democratization of opportunity, accessibility, adaptability, and comprehensiveness” (Levin & Dennison, 1989, as cited in Owen, 1996, p. 17).

BC’s college system originated in 1963 under the Public Schools Act, arising from recommendations of the province’s Chant Commission and the University of British Columbia’s McDonald Report, to address the scarcity of educated workers. Governance reverted, away from local jurisdictions, to the provincial government in 1977 with the proclamation of the College and Provincial Institute Act (Levin, 2003), mandated to offer skills training, upgrading, and two-year university-transfer diplomas. In 1988, the *Access to advanced education and job training in BC report of the access committee* culminated in

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<sup>24</sup> Canada’s publicly funded colleges, referred to in the literature, include university colleges. Until 2008, BC’s colleges and university colleges shared provincial governance legislation: The College and Institute Act.

amended legislation, establishing the university college, setting the stage for what is still referred to colloquially as 'access for all,' the notion of ready access to post-secondary education. The inclusive ethos of colleges and university colleges, which continues in the mandate of special purpose teaching universities, is directly attributable to this access philosophy which, in my view, trumps success defined by other economic, growth, or efficiency measures.

The new university college model retained characteristics of the community college and, for the first time outside of the university proper, was awarded dispensation to grant baccalaureate degrees. "Thus, at one and the same time, the university college promoted both an egalitarian and a meritocratic institution" (Levin, 2003, p. 448). The college tradition of open access was upheld and both traditional and applied baccalaureate degrees in arts, science, business, and design, were offered.

The College and Institute Act<sup>25</sup>, defining the respective roles and delineating responsibilities of community colleges and university colleges, was later amended to allow colleges to offer applied baccalaureate degrees and university colleges to offer baccalaureate and applied masters degrees. In keeping with community colleges' egalitarian roots, Adult Basic Education was retained. Applicable sections of the Act have since been repealed and succeeded by legislation introducing special purpose teaching universities. The College and Institute Act, until September, 2008, regulated three university colleges, 12 colleges, four institutes, and a distance learning agency, with the Ministry of Advanced Education's Colleges and University Colleges Branch, providing

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<sup>25</sup> College and Institute Act, [RSBC 1996] CHAPTER 52, Part 3 — Colleges, University Colleges and Provincial Institutes. [http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/96052\\_01.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/96052_01.htm). [Accessed October 22, 2007]

Excerpted from The College and Institute Act:

“Objects of a college

6 The objects of a college are to provide comprehensive

- (a) courses of study at the first and second year levels of a baccalaureate degree program,
- (a.1) courses of study for an applied baccalaureate degree program,
- (b) post secondary education or training,
- (b.1) adult basic education, and
- (c) continuing education.

Objects of a university college

7 The objects of a university college are to provide comprehensive

- (a) courses of study for a baccalaureate degree program,
- (a.1) courses of study for an applied masters degree program,
- (b) post secondary education or training,
- (b.1) adult basic education, and
- (c) continuing education.

Objects of a Provincial institute

8 The objects of a Provincial institute are to provide instruction and perform other functions designated by the minister under section 2 (2).

Objects of the British Columbia Institute of Technology

8.1 The objects of BCIT are to act as a polytechnic institution for British Columbia by

- (a) providing courses of instruction in technological and vocational matters and subjects,
- (b) providing courses of instruction at the baccalaureate and applied masters degree levels, and
- (c) performing other functions designated by the minister.”

“direction, leadership and support to 12 public colleges, three public university colleges and the Knowledge Network” (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007).

This legislation, following recommendations of the 2007 *Campus 2020* report:

*Access & Excellence: The Campus 2020 Plan for British Columbia's Post-Secondary Education System* (Ibid) was supplanted by legislative amendments to the

University Act introduced by then Minister Coell, Minister of Advanced Education, in 2008. It remains to be seen whether the special purpose teaching university paradigm will retain the best of university colleges' qualities.

In the 1980s, BC's economic downturn contributed to dramatically reduced funding for higher education (Owen, 1996) at a time when reliance on immigration had failed to fill the province's need for an educated and skilled workforce. This, along with low post-secondary participation, fuelled demands “for reasonable access to degree programs in the province” (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004, p. 22). The province responded by establishing the Provincial Access Committee, reporting to what was then the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training. In 1988, their report articulated proposals for “expanding the public system through institutional differentiation ... increasing capacity (as well competition)” (Dennison & Schuetze, p. 20). Amongst its recommendations the university college was proposed:

These institutions would be grafted administratively onto existing community colleges and (initially) connected academically onto one of the existing universities (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004, p. 22).

This was implemented in short order; legislation was amended and university colleges were established. In 1998, there were 28 BC public post-secondary institutions, five of which were university colleges: University College of the Fraser Valley, Kwantlen University College, Malaspina University College, University College of the Cariboo, and Okanagan University College. Three remained until 2008 and were then incorporated into the University Act by way of statutory Designation of Special Purpose, Teaching Universities Regulation 220<sup>26</sup>. Corresponding sections of the College and Institute Act were repealed.

Universities and university colleges shared neither history nor legislation; governing statutes and accreditation requirements, such as those of the Association of Universities and Colleges (AUCC), differ. Traditionally, faculty participation in university governance is incorporated in canon. In contrast, institutions governed by the College and Institute Act limited faculty to advisory roles. Legislative amendments later incorporated faculty representation through education councils or senates<sup>27</sup> (Owen, 1996), although to a lesser degree. Early in the process, the Ministry of Advanced Education signalled its preference for a collaborative governance model for the proposed regional universities.

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<sup>26</sup> Institutions designated as special purpose teaching universities: Capilano University (formerly Capilano College); Emily Carr University of Art and Design (formerly Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design); Kwantlen Polytechnic University (formerly Kwantlen University College); Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University-College); University of the Fraser Valley (formerly University College of the Fraser Valley). <http://www.bclaw.ca> [Accessed March 19, 2009]

<sup>27</sup> “Forms of governance that were based upon administrative or governing board authority were replaced by a form of bicameral governance: indeed provincial legislation was enacted to permit faculty a role in board governance and to enshrine a senate-type body for colleges in legislation. What was formerly the domain of administrators and boards members – decision making authority – was now shared with faculty.” (Levin, 2003, p. 457)

Remarkably, the 2008 University Act amendments, integrating special purpose teaching universities, require fewer faculty representatives than universities proper. As late as 2003, AUCC strengthened its requirement for “authority vested in academic staff” (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004, p. 28) by requiring faculty representation democratically elected to a senate, representing a dramatic shift from the bureaucracy of power vested in management teams advising governing boards (Dennison & Schuetze, 2004). Paradoxically, uncertainties over roles prevail, with faculty perceiving their exclusion to be inconsistent with demands for their inclusion. Rather than empowering faculty as intended, I have observed significant unease, discord even, arising from conflicting perceptions and expectations of their advisory capacity. Legislative amendments and AUCC tenets clearly portent faculty inclusion; missing is the dialogue requisite to a sense of inclusion, to clarify roles and foster enthusiastic collaboration necessary to dispel the disparaging ‘us versus them’ rhetoric reminiscent of the past, when faculty and leadership roles were functionally distinctive. It remains to be seen whether the collaborative regional university governance model will capture the essence of faculty participation in a constructive manner.

*the university college revisited...*

The dynamism of institutions borne out of BC’s college system is evident in their short, yet eventful history. The number of students served and programs offered proliferated, fuelled by competitive, demographic, economic, and social demands for access to quality post-secondary education. University colleges

were governed by a Board of Governors, required (by statute<sup>28</sup>) to recognize the authority of the institution's Education Council, which was comprised of elected faculty, students, staff, and appointed administrator members. The relationship between the Board and Education Council, intended to be collaborative and reciprocal, was, paradoxically, imposed by government legislation. It is assumed that the collaborative paradigm was also intended to characterize the relationships of faculty within academic departments and their deans. Whereas areas of these organizations are highly vertical, these two areas of the BC university college epitomize Taylor's (2004) direct-access society, or, as described by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Program's (ACBSP)<sup>29</sup> accreditation report on the structure of the School of Business, Kwantlen University College, as "participative, dynamic and decidedly bottom up" (ACBSP, 2006).

According to 'student headcount totals', compiled by the Information and Data Management Branch of BC's Ministry of Advanced Education, university colleges, colleges, and institutes governed by the College and Institute Act accepted 183,504 "students who began or continued courses in academic year

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<sup>28</sup> COLLEGE AND INSTITUTE ACT  
[RSBC 1996], CHAPTER 52, Part 4

"23 (1) An education council must advise the board, and the board must seek advice from the education council, on the development of educational policy for the following matters:

(a) the mission statement and the educational goals, objectives, strategies and priorities of the institution;

(b) proposals about implementation of courses or programs leading to certificates, diplomas or degrees, including the length of or hours for courses or programs..."

<sup>29</sup> Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs' assessment of the School of Business, Kwantlen University College. The ACBSP Feedback Report – October 22, 2006, was based on several criteria, including an accreditation team field evaluation.



2004-2005" (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2006). A significant portion (51,091) was enrolled in one of BC's three university colleges – Kwantlen University College, Malaspina University College, and University College University College of the Fraser Valley. University student enrolment for the same academic year totalled 87,024 in BC's six universities (Statistics Canada, 2006). Clearly, these institutions (special purpose teaching universities, née university colleges and community colleges) represent a major force in BC's post-secondary landscape.

*struggling for identity...*

The transition from community college to university college was effective but difficult, as Levin (2003) attests: "Considerable government intervention and organizational friction and change accompanied the evolution of the community college to university college" (p. 449). The 'top down' imposition of the university college over the community college model met, predictably considering their exclusion, with faculty resistance; a scene once more being played out in the transition to the special purpose teaching university. Even from its inception, the university college moniker appears to have met with little approval, generating derision and confusion: was it a college or a university and

what distinguished it from a university or a college<sup>30</sup>? Students worried about the value of hard-won degrees, the public questioned the concept, faculty and staff at times conveyed contempt for the designation ‘university college,’ which was illustrated by Levin’s 2001 survey of faculty attitudes, which I can attest, persisted to the ‘end.’ This pervasive resistance to the designation, or label, was acknowledged in the Campus 2020 report:

The university college model of learning has succeeded, but, for several reasons, the label has failed. This is in part because an innovative institutional model that incorporates developmental, vocational and undergraduate education has not been adopted elsewhere in Canada. It is in part because the label was deliberately intended to connote a hybrid, and therefore something which is neither completely one thing nor another. And it is, in part, because Thompson Rivers University and UBC Okanagan were created to respond to regional demands for access. These initiatives, while innovative, implied there was something transitional, rather than final, in the concept of the university college (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007, p. 66).

I find this disconcerting, given the decades that stakeholders had to ‘adjust’ to the new model, particularly with yet another momentous reorganization

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<sup>30</sup> “What is a university college? Kwantlen University College offers a new model for a comprehensive undergraduate university that develops bachelor’s degrees and other applied credentials to successfully meet the evolving needs of regional and global employment markets. Many of our degrees are unique to Western Canada. Our university college provides you with a unique opportunity to bridge certificate and diploma credentials with degrees, creating the option of academic and professional enhancement of applied and technical programs. We are the best of both worlds — a university and a college.” <http://www.kwantlen.bc.ca/about.html>. [Accessed September 22, 2008].

underway, seemingly headed in the same direction. It is difficult to believe that tension between proponents of one or the other, arising from the thorny transition of college to university college, still exists (Levin, 2003; Owen, 1996). Faculty continue to argue the merits of 'college' versus 'university,' 'diploma' versus 'degree,' and 'academic' versus 'trade' programs. This, with the transition to special purpose teaching university, has escalated to include 'teaching' versus 'research,' 'instructor' versus 'professor,' 'academic' versus 'professional,' and wrangling over tenure and credentials. All of this is exacerbated by the extreme intrusion of the provincial government; for example, by once again inexplicably imposing particularly unfitting monikers on new institutions<sup>31</sup>. Entrenched in the culture, grumbling rather than deliberation prevails, demonstrating faculty's resistance to new governance paradigms (Levin, 2003). It would seem unreasonable to expect otherwise; it being doubtful that one can strongly identify with an institution that is repeatedly, and in short order, subjected to externally-driven reinvention.

In hindsight, one might even conclude the university college paradigm to be transitory. Within a decade, the province recommended its statutory abolishment in favour of new legislation, granting regional university status to BC's existing university colleges in the form of special purpose teaching

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<sup>31</sup> The 'polytechnic' of Kwantlen Polytechnic University's moniker was reportedly an unwelcome surprise upon its public announcement, particularly as the institution had lobbied the provincial government against it and continues to struggle with its meaning.

universities<sup>32</sup> (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007). Reaction in the public sphere was swift and effective in the form of meetings, petitions, and pleas to the provincial government, to clear effect as various submissions were incorporated into the legislation<sup>33</sup>. The following year, relevant sections of the College and Institute Act governing the remaining three university colleges, one college and one institute, were repealed by the Ministry of Advanced Education and reincarnated as special purpose teaching universities<sup>34</sup>, subsumed under amendments to the University Act. It remains to be seen how the academic faculty and community at large will accept this latest incarnation as the new university struggles for its place in the increasingly globalized and competitive 'business' of education.

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<sup>32</sup> The report, Access and Excellence: The Campus 2020 Plan for British Columbia's Post-Secondary Education System, [www.aved.gov.bc.ca/campus2020](http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/campus2020), submitted to Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell in April 2007, arising from collaborative dialogue of citizen, business, student, labour, aboriginal, and multicultural groups; communities; post-secondary institutions, in province wide symposia; five months of deliberations culminated in fifty-two recommendations, currently under consideration by the provincial government. Author, Geoff Plant, acknowledged the significance of the deliberative process in arriving at the Campus 2020 recommendations - a manifestation of modernity's growth of the public sphere, wherein people (the public) are drawn into a common space to participate in the discourse (Taylor, 2004): "The consultation process that led to my report generated spirited and fresh discussions about the critically important role of post-secondary education in B.C. My recommendations will directly help government map for the future" (Filion, April 23, 2007). "Recommendation number 35 proposes all university colleges in the province become regional universities" (Jackson, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Opposition was particularly robust to Campus 2020, Recommendation 37: "In conjunction with the expansion of regional universities and the opportunities for enhanced collaboration and access to degree programs, restore the primary focus of community colleges by precluding colleges from granting degrees." (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2007)

Reaction was swift: Capilano College lobbied for support of their application for regional university status with some urgency at the prospect of losing degree-granting status. "Joan McIntyre, MLA for West Vancouver-Garibaldi, presented Capilano's regional university designation petition with 11,711 signatures to Legislature on October 31" (Capilano College, 2007). Other colleges and their students too reacted to Recommendation 37; the preclusion of degree-granting status was the most contentious Campus 2020 issue and, in response to protestations, was re-examined by the ministry. Not all protests were successful: the name, Kwantlen Polytechnic University was imposed upon Kwantlen University College despite objections.

<sup>34</sup> Part 1 of the University Act [RSBC 1996] Chapter 468 defines "university" to include "(b) a special purpose teaching university" <http://www.bclaws.ca> [Accessed March 15, 2009]

### *globalization's influence on the university college...*

Modernity's externalities factor into the post-secondary organizational milieu, as the fallout of globalization and other elements of modernity, compel organizations to respond. While some, even now, fail to recognize globalism's impact on their institutions, others recognized, as early as the 1990s, that "globalization, and particularly economic globalization, was identified as a major force responsible for institutional change in higher education" (Levin, 2003, p. 451). Globalism is defined by Robertson<sup>35</sup> "as a concept that refers to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (as cited in Currie, 1998, p. 8), describing its effect on "the global world as one where time and space are compressed (Ibid, p. 8). This is evident everywhere, from offshore outsourcing (Heiskanen, 2007) and movement of people and capital (Sennett, 2007) to the plethora of inexpensive commodities from far-away sources and increased competitive pressures on all organizations, including those of higher education. Reorganization has become a common response to which post-secondary institutions are not immune, being seriously impacted by "government policy and legislation and ... can be construed in part as responses to economic globalization" (Levin, 2003, p. 451). Governments eagerly exploit colleges' malleability in managing change; the university college was created out of this ideology, reflecting "... the local or regional response to changing global conditions" (Ibid, p. 463). Increased mobility, technological

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<sup>35</sup> The word, globalization, appears to have been coined in the 1960s, yet it was first prominently positioned in the title of a sociological paper, in 1985 (Currie, 1998) by Robertson.

advances, and the movement of capital directly impact the demand and supply of knowledge and skills, and continue to steer policy<sup>36</sup>.

Levin (1999, 2003) analyzed the relationship between technological advances, globalization, and the pressures for change they exert on Canadian colleges and, particularly, BC's hybrid universities<sup>37</sup>. He found them to be particularly vulnerable to the policies of the day imposed by "the structural and legislative presence and predominant role of government" (Levin, 1999, p. 379). Levin concluded in a review of four BC institutions that the provincial government "is the major external influencer of college behaviours and actions" (Ibid, p. 384), reigning over governance, structure, funding, and periodically interfering in labour affairs. Government interference, one of many externalities affecting university colleges, has created a paradox whereby "government policy and actions detach colleges from direct impact of globalization; on the other hand government behaviours place colleges in the vortex of global forces" (Ibid, p. 379). The result of this political imperative is ubiquitous and pervasive, essentially handicapping institutional administrators, encumbering long-term planning, and contributing to omnipresent levels of angst, rooted in the uncertainty of, what many consider to be, political whims. Interestingly, and

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<sup>36</sup> *Campus 2020*: "In carrying out its purposes, a regional university must serve the educational and training needs in the region specified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council" (Ministry of Advanced Education, Province of British Columbia, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Of the four Canadian institutions studied, Levin describes a B.C. institution (described, but not identified) as "a hybrid type of university" (p. 392) in an apparent reference to the university college model. John Levin's early study of U.S. and Canadian colleges, involved 400 interviewees, document analyses, and observational data (Levin, 1999). Levin continued this study, including again interviewing participants; his conclusions are presented in his 2003 paper, *Organizational paradigm shift and the university colleges of British Columbia* (Levin, 2003), in which he clearly identifies the hybrid university as the BC university college.

worrying too, is that Levin (2003) later revisited his research and found virtually no change in approaches or outlook over time: people were as entrenched as ever in their worldview long after the form and function of their institutions, and their roles within them, had changed.

This parallels my observations: high-functioning professional administrators and educators, unable or unwilling to accept their changing environment, appear mired in paradigms of the past. The reluctance or inability to grasp the significance of the changing world around us to us is, in my opinion, a major contributor to the sense of institutional tensions in some organizations. It is also my opinion that a fundamental lack of awareness at its root is resolvable, given clear and mindful leadership; this project, I hope, will draw the community into frank and clear deliberations on the issues and pressures to which we are all exposed. “The compression of time and integration of space” (Robertson, 1992 as cited in Levin, 1999, p. 378) exerted by modernity’s externalities have translated into work and information overload, and attendant anxiety (Milne, 2007; Bibby, 2007). It appears we have been caught unaware in the technological zeitgeist and, according to Homer-Dixon’s (2000) theory, are trapped in the “ingenuity gap” (Ibid, p. 1) between using technology and understanding its social ramifications, in “collective belief and consensus, by tacit, unquestioned, and often grossly simplistic assumptions about how the world works, and often by mutual and willful self-delusion” (Ibid, p. 150). With escalating “complexity, unpredictability, and pace of events in our world ... they will need more ingenuity – that is, more ideas for solving their technical and

social problems” (Ibid, pp. 1-2). The deficit of ‘ingenuity’ – used in the manner of Dixon to mean a shortage of creativity and understanding, and the capacity for their application in finding resolutions to complex problems has profound implications at a time when these qualities are increasingly needed, to contend with ubiquitous change.

The evolution of special purpose teaching universities demonstrates Robertson’s compression of time and space (Currie, 1998) in the increasingly competitive business of higher education. Ever-increasing demands for efficiency, necessitated by global pressures and reduced government funding, concomitant with the challenges of technological development, implementation, and the ubiquitous upgrading they entail, directly impacts deans and faculty as administrative responsibilities expand or devolve down and around.

Overwhelmed with added responsibilities, faculty are increasingly demotivated by leaders’ failure to address performance pressures (Levin, 1999). Modernity, in this model, appears far from empowering as roles become more autonomous and individuals overworked and insular.

It has been my experience that overwhelmed deans rely on faculty’s skill and goodwill to ‘take care of business.’ To illustrate the enormity of BC’s university college dean’s responsibilities, prior to their re-emergence as special purpose teaching universities: Malaspina University College’s Faculty of Management, under the direction of a dean, offered certificates, diplomas, a bachelor degree in five specialty areas<sup>38</sup>, and two masters degrees<sup>39</sup>, with ‘about

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.mala.ca/management/index.asp> [Accessed November 22, 2007]



50' faculty members<sup>40</sup>. The University College of the Fraser Valley's Faculty of Professional Studies, under the direction of a dean, managed several schools: The School of Child, Youth, & Family Studies; Education Studies; Health Sciences; Information Technology; Social Work & Human Resources; offering certificates, diplomas and bachelor degrees<sup>41</sup>. Kwantlen University College's School of Business, under the direction of a dean and two associate deans managed 12 programs<sup>42</sup>, comprising certificates, diplomas, and bachelor degrees, with 159 faculty members<sup>43</sup>. This illustrates the magnitude of deans' responsibilities and their correspondingly staggering workloads. To complicate matters, in addition to answering to the management of their unionized institutions in the form of boards, senates, and education councils, these deaneries are indirectly governed by provincial statute and are thus vulnerable to political interference (Levin, 2003). While shouldering full responsibility for their departments, deans have little control under a form of instrumentality that imposes unrealistic, under-resourced expectations upon them. Rather than empowering, this serves to rob them of their capacity to lead. Faculty are similarly pressured by pervasive instrumentalism.

The instrumentalism of completing the 'work,' to the exclusion of all else, impacts the quality of colleagues relationships and the level of service we

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<sup>39</sup> <http://www.mala.ca/management/graduateprograms.asp> [Accessed November 22, 2007]

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.mala.ca/management/ourpeople.asp> [Accessed November 22, 2007]

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.ucfv.ca/Faculty\\_of\\_Professional\\_Studies.htm](http://www.ucfv.ca/Faculty_of_Professional_Studies.htm) [Accessed November 22, 2007]

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.kwantlen.ca/business.html> [Accessed November 22, 2007]

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.kwantlen.ca/business/faculty.html> [Accessed November 22, 2007]

provide to our students, with administrative priorities eclipsing their needs. Evidently, Levin observed the same; degree program faculty reducing their time with students in order to attend to their significant non-teaching responsibilities (Levin, 1999). While the issue at hand appears to one of limited resources, it is incumbent on us to look to the greater cause, rather than narrow symptoms:

Indeed, to ignore the pervasive use and impact of technology in the workplace in education is to miss a critical dimension of globalization, the compression of time and integration of space (Robertson, 1992 as cited in Levin, 1999, p. 378).

Unanticipated and pervasively negative consequences arise from our instrumental response to modernity's expression in globalism and technology (Taylor, 2004). Despite the considerable impact on administrators, faculty, staff, and students, Levin surmises that stakeholders generally underestimate their impact: "the mainstream view of Canadian higher education does not connect present institutional inadequacies or disaffection to globalization" (Levin, 1999, p.381). Instead, there is a tendency to attribute dissatisfactions to resource scarcity. Echoing Levin's findings, I observe a frustrated faculty collective resort to acerbic and derailing conduct, routinely attributing the myriad problems encountered in any organization to inadequate resources. This habitual, seemingly acculturated, tendency to over-simplify diminishes interrogating, or even contemplating, other possible causes. As organizations and individuals face multiple pressures to accomplish more and perform more efficiently, instrumentally accomplishing imposed mandates increasingly detracts from

maintaining a collegial and collaborative environment. Moreover, this derails deliberation and innovative thinking vital to flat organizations (Taylor, 2004; Bushe, 2001), which, ironically, by virtue of downloading responsibilities, has increased the pressure on the very personnel that they rely upon for innovative ideas. Faculty, increasingly frustrated by such pressures are indeed becoming more efficient, yet the collegiality of academic departments is being sacrificed in favour of collective instrumentalism.

*the peer administered academic department...*

Special purpose teaching university academic departments are managed by a dean who may be assisted by associate deans. Faculty work with (not under) the direction of an elected faculty chairperson (known as the 'chair,' 'convenor,' or 'department head') who takes on a significant portion of the department's administrative responsibilities. The chair remains a faculty member with time release for administrative functions, but is not a designated manager and has no executive authority over faculty, staff, or resources; nor does this position provide a platform for substantive policy input. Peer administered academic departments originated in community colleges at a time when colleges were small; departments comprised fewer than ten faculty members, program offerings were limited, and all were manageable by deans who actively directed and supervised their activities; that is, before their phenomenal development over the past two decades. As an example, Kwantlen University College's<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Now, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

School of Business academic accounting department experienced rapid growth to 40 instructors from three, yet continued to function with the original time released department convener; this in concert with limited direction from a deanery, itself struggling with the school's remarkable growth to 159 faculty members<sup>45</sup>.

Clearly, conveners are overwhelmed, particularly in large and widely distributed departments. These dedicated and overworked professionals have no positional authority and receive no additional remuneration or other management 'perks' normally associated with their level of responsibility. Essentially, conveners rely on the goodwill of stakeholders, the cooperation of faculty, and a direct line of communication to the dean to get things done. As conveners remain on par with other faculty – without authority to appoint, delegate, or in any way appropriate individuals to a task – they are highly reliant on the goodwill of faculty 'volunteers' who increasingly take on administrative functions or form committees for more complex projects, such as program development. As a result, and necessitated by downsizing, adhocracies<sup>46</sup> have emerged; without being formally 'managed,' faculty are effectively responsible

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.kwantlen.ca/business/faculty.html> [Accessed November 22, 2007]

<sup>46</sup> The term, 'ad-hocracy' originated with Toffler's *Future Shock*, becoming popularized thereafter as, 'adhocracy,' Mintzberg later theorized on 'adhocracy' as a "project structure" (see below). While elements of peer administration resemble Mintzberg's *project structure*, particularly when embarking on a particular project of limited purpose and duration, it becomes less germane when referring to the university college and peer administered academic department structure generally. Therefore, the meaning assigned in this paper with respect to the peer administered academic department generally is limited to its simplest semantic terms: according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2009), ad-hocracy means "[a] flexible and informal style of organization and management, characterized by a lack of bureaucracy. Also (*depreciative*): bureaucracy characterized by inconsistency and lack of planning." Retrieved November 30, 2009, from <http://dictionary/oed.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca>

for departments' administration and program delivery. This extreme informality is unsustainable in the absence of Mintzberg's elegantly 'simple' "mutual adjustment ... the simple process of informal communication" (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 3). This authentic mutuality and capacity to accommodate others' idiosyncrasies, capabilities, and talents – the competencies, give-and-take, and forthright communication required of members in any form of adhocracy – has, paradoxically, both the capacity to energize and to exhaust innovation (Ibid).

That the 'ends' are accomplished with alacrity is a tribute to the dignity and goodwill of colleagues, yet these admirable qualities may be inadvertently enabling profoundly inadequate leadership, demonstrated by executive inattention to the 'means' by which they are accomplished. This has not gone unnoticed by accreditation bodies, such as the AUCC and ACBSP, which have questioned the dearth of performance measures and formal standards.

Astoundingly, there are still few formal venues for faculty recognition; excellence remains unrewarded as dedicated individuals eventually exhaust themselves.

There is a profound irony in that the congruence of leaders' and faculty's discontent – their parallel grievances deriving out of modernity's externalities is inexplicably lost on individual members. It appears that neither followership nor leadership is successfully emerging from long-established community-college patterns of performance.

*implications of excessive flattening...*

Academic departments have become increasingly flatter over time, a phenomenon partially attributable to phenomenal growth, fiscal pressures, and enabling technologies. The number of faculty members has increased commensurate with that of students, while administrative management and staff have not, primarily due to successive down-sizing measures (Owen, 1996) over time and increasingly flat governance models imposed upon them by virtue of legislative and funding changes. I have observed that flat academic departments, overly reliant on communications technology, broaden the ingenuity gap (Homer-Dixon, 2000). Homer-Dixon (2000) has come to the understanding that “social ingenuity is prerequisite to technical ingenuity” (Ibid, p. 232). Isolated deans believe their faculty to be adequately supported, while faculty appear reciprocally unsympathetic to their deans’ challenges; both are similarly caught in the flattening snare. Faculty, too, suffer from isolation phenomena; of individualistic departmental cultures exacerbated by the practicalities of large departments, multiple campus locations, and classes extended into evenings, weekends, and summer semesters, and dependence on electronic communications. Rather than functioning as a cohesive team, faculty peers function as a collective of individuals. As such, we experience our individual successes and failures independently of each other, occasionally coming together to work on required projects and then immediately dissimilating into radical individualism. The disadvantages and difficulties arising out of this collective character are contemplated in Chapter Three.

My colleagues embody modernity's individualism, fiercely guarding their autonomy. While we work with alacrity, we do so independently with remarkably little face-to-face interaction and little direction; I have observed this evolving into a climate of intolerance to interference. A supercilious 'stay out of my sandbox' attitude is pervasive, with collective resistance to basic management. For example, performance evaluations, a normal and generally accepted human resource practice, are interpreted as unwarranted encroachment upon individual professionalism, generating tension between management, unions or faculty associations, and faculty – a phenomenon I have observed throughout the college system. This triumvirate of dissatisfaction fuels dissent rather than collegiality, illustrative of the looming obstacles to effective leadership associated with distributed authority. Bushe (2001) cautions that when otherwise normal direction is misunderstood as interference, leaders face the possibility of losing control; an irony which I suggest plays out frequently in post-secondary institutions. The incongruity of faculty members, clamouring for more leadership – direction and resources – while simultaneously decrying normal internal controls, I suggest, illustrates the urgency for clarity. Faculty fault disengaged deaneries; conversely, deans, frustrated by their perception of unwarranted faculty resistance, disengage further. The antithesis of mindfulness, their mutual dismissiveness breeds misunderstanding and contempt. Assuaging this disparity is central to collegiality, respectful discourse, collaboration, and mindful action; how to do so is fundamental to this project. In

Chapter Five, I look to the possibilities of a version of clear leadership in remedying root causes of such mutual misunderstanding (Bushe, 2001).

These machinations lead one to consider the possibility that such departments may be too flat, which I suspect may be one of the 'questions' of 21<sup>st</sup> century organizational enquiry. Henricks (2005) suggests that "[w]hen you have too little hierarchy, decisions don't get made or are made wrongly by employees who lack experience, accountability or motivation to do the work of the missing managers" (Henricks, 2005, p. 69). Dive (2003) refers to 'underfed' or 'underlayered' organizations resulting from injudicious flattening. Overly flat organizations suffer from a loss of accountability, a decrease in motivation and teamwork, over-reliance on technology, unreasonable expectations of the knowledge and ability of employees, and the indignity of treating individuals as interchangeable units (Dive, 2003). People need feedback and recognition, information and guidance, assistance and support, and moderation. Within peer administered departments, these are in short supply, as is respectful discourse amongst faculty peers. Such 'underfed' departments, while elegantly simple, are susceptible to developing dysfunctional systems; a profound and inexplicable irony as we eagerly share our expertise of these tenets with the student milieu, yet function as if immune.

*exploring further...*

This background to the flattening phenomenon, in publicly funded BC colleges and the newly minted special purpose teaching universities, forms the



basis for an exploration into possible causes for the failure of some flat organizations to live up to their promise. Indeed, the post-secondary institutions with which I have been associated are functioning at an extraordinary high level; however, my concern is that the energy and innovation demanded of their membership may not be sustainable, in its current model, given modernity's pressures and the ubiquity of resource constraints. These organizations have, from inception, worked on the proverbial 'shoe-string', a stressor that appears to be fuelling the movement to even flatter management paradigms at a time when they need "continuous improvement, adaptation, and collective problem solving in the face of complex challenges that keep arising" (Fullan, 2005, p. 22)<sup>47</sup>. Yet, I suggest that the adoption of the organizational flat paradigm, in concert with modernity's externalities, are in and of themselves threatening the collaboration, deliberation, discourse, and mutual understanding of each other, requisite to its own empowerment model. The consequences of ineffective leadership strategies and failing followership are examined in Chapter Three, with broader origins and implications considered in Chapter Four. Chapter Five explores the possibilities of clear and mindful leadership strategies as an effective antidote.

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Fullan - Ontario's Special Advisor on Education to the Premier, and Minister of Education (Fullan, 2005)

### CHAPTER 3 MODERNITY'S INFLUENCE ON FLAT ORGANIZATIONS

The trend towards organizational flattening and, specifically, the peer administered academic department of the special purpose teaching university, exemplifies modernity. In this chapter, I will explore the implications of modernity's externalities ultimate effects on individuals in flat organizations; which, in turn, inform leadership praxis. I look to the interconnections of decentralization, individualism, and democratization, and the technologies that enable them. The paradox of radical individualism coexisting with the egalitarianism that is fundamental to collaborative democratic practice, and rankist behaviour in an equalitarian society, shapes my frame of reference. An understanding of the simultaneously empowering and disempowering capacities of communications and information technologies, at both a macro and micro level of flat organizations, is crucial to understanding their influences on leadership. By exploring broader social influences beyond the institution, I hope to bring understanding to human foibles that inform the character of peer administered academic departments.

*interrogating complacency ...*

The culture of autonomy, pervasive in special purpose teaching universities and their academic departments' flat organizational structure, is no longer sustaining them as learning organizations. The very characteristics that

once allowed for their flexibility now conspire to diminish their ingenuity. While collaboration and innovation are demanded of them, unceasing bombardment by externalities beyond their control are overwhelming their deans, faculty, and staff, eroding their capacity to 'learn' and grow healthy systems. Leaders and faculty are equally ensnared in webs of frustration, rather than connectedness, in environments rife with miscommunication and misunderstanding. While this results in some decidedly un-collaborative conduct, I suggest it reflects the deterioration of the organizational model rather than reflecting poorly on the collective character of its membership.

My colleagues are dedicated educators and talented administrators who deserve the recognition and resources to maintain the vitality of these exceptional institutions, which I fear is becoming increasingly unsustainable. The question then becomes, how do we ensure that these institutions continue as vibrant learning organizations? Some insight into root causes, rather than merely examining their symptoms is warranted – an exploration into the 'phenomenal world' (Henley, 2006) in which we are immersed, along with the contractions surrounding our understanding of awareness, authenticity, democracy, technology, information even, and of self and others. In this way, some of the unanticipated undesirable outcomes can be understood, addressed and, in the future, avoided. To this end, I look to Taylor's (2004) interrogation of modernity for guidance in navigating the unforeseen and generally unrecognized bearing modernity's influence has on flat organizations.

If one presumes that political representation reflects the citizenry, then, by implication, citizens inform organizational culture and practices and “we are not disembodied beings...our individual desires and our ability to satisfy them derive from and depend on the community that nourishes us” (Osborne, 2001, p. 43); in turn, informing our individual “subjective truth” (Bushe, 2001, p. 11) and society’s broader consciousness (Osborne, 2001). I will examine individualism, technology, and representation according to measurement criteria familiar to all Canadians – gender and visible minorities<sup>48</sup> – with a view to challenging our complacent self-characterization as diverse, egalitarian, and resolutely democratic. I suggest that many colleagues – members of peer administered academic departments – would also describe the management of their departments in similar terms. Conversely, many others, I among them, would disagree and further suggest that such egalitarian ideals are generally subordinated, in favour of instrumentalism, which some justify as a response to unrelenting demands. The response to such complacency and its impact on peer administered academic departments, I suggest, may be found in clear leadership skills (Bushe, 2001), rooted in clarity, sharing, and communicating – in building awareness, cooperation, respect, and understanding, and distributed leadership rooted in awareness of one’s self, others, and the phenomenal world. These represent clear and mindful leadership strategies, explicated in Chapter Five, that I propose as a promising response to modernity’s more taxing externalities.

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<sup>48</sup> Canada has been criticized by The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of the United Nations for using the discriminatory term ‘visible minority.’

Modernity's pressures, to which we and our organizations must respond, will be explored in this chapter and further, in Chapter Four.

*modernity's externalities explored...*

The impact of modernity's influence – flattening hierarchies, globalism, the movement to self-expression and individuality, democratization, and communication technologies – upon BC's college environs is both complex and pervasive. Whether or not recognized by decision-makers, modernity's externalities are incorporated into institutional consciousness:

Organizations are now confronted with two sources of change: the traditional type that is initiated and managed, and external changes over which no one has control. We are just beginning to experience what it is like to operate in a global environment of increasing chaos, of events beyond our control that have a devastating impact on our internal operations and culture (Wheatley, 2007, p. 114).

External pressures on organizations are frequently unpredictable and subtle, yet are manageable, given mindful consideration. The effects of technological advances, individualism, and diversity on democratic practices, which alternatively enhance and hinder a college's spirit, humanity, and creativity, are considered in this research. Democratic administration, which is the mainstay of peer administered academic departments; the promise and reality of diverse membership; and the expectations of community competing with those of radical individualism deserve attention. Diverse skills, perspectives, and knowledge are all vital to understanding and resolving complex issues, impossible for a lone

individual (Johnston, as cited in Coueslan, 2008). Multidimensional capacities are essential to an institution's spirit, innovation, and humanity, particularly in times of radical change, and should be nurtured. Post-secondary institutions desperately need these qualities, particularly special purpose teaching universities, which have proven extraordinarily vulnerable to externalities. By revealing some of modernity's more subtle nuances, it is hoped that institutional leaders will be drawn into the discourse and, heeding their possibilities, translate this knowledge into mindful action that exploits the best, of modernity, and deflects the worst.

Environmentalists and political scientists wearily observe that indifference and the disinclination to respond to externalities are major contributors to catastrophe. It appears individuals disregard external pressures, which directly impact their circumstances, for a variety of reasons, including a lack of awareness or interest, a feeling of powerlessness, or a "collective belief and consensus, by tacit, unquestioned, and often grossly simplistic assumptions about how the world works, and often by mutual and willful self-delusion" (Homer-Dixon, 2000, p. 150). Golden (Kennedy, 2007) refers to alarmingly pervasive levels of complacency and unawareness amongst Canadians on important issues which directly impact their lives<sup>49</sup> – a disturbing observation given modernity's interconnectedness, mobility, access to information, and communications technologies. It is imperative that organizational leaders are

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<sup>49</sup> Conference Board of Canada's January, 2007 report, *Mission Possible: Sustainable Prosperity for Canada* (Kennedy, 2007)

receptive to the changing environment and its inherent complexity, whether or not perceived to be beyond their control. Being aware of modernity's more disconcerting transformational implications is particularly germane to flat organizations. What, for instance, are the implications of systematically imposed self-direction upon departments administered by autonomous, diverse, highly individualistic peers, in times of dynamic change?

Change, in the form of modernity's externalities, is evident in the resulting fallout from the pace, growth, and change in Canada's economy. The growth of the knowledge economy with its corresponding technological advancements and increased competition on a global scale, compels knowledge-directed innovation in response (Human Resources Development Canada & Industry Canada, 2003). For organizations to be innovative, I suggest that, beyond an underlying sense of energy, there must be an understanding of the complexities of knowledge, of how information is gathered and disseminated and of the organization's capacity to foster a learning environment. Homer-Dixon explains this in terms of organizational ingenuity – "ideas for solving technical and social problems" (Homer-Dixon, 2000, p. 2) – by exploring relationships in terms of complexity theory (Homer-Dixon, 2000). Today's interconnected organizations represent systems which diversify as they proliferate and thereby are strengthened as more stable and sophisticated connections develop. Merely being situated in the system does not drive these developments; nor, surprisingly, does increasing the number of participants advance its complexity, diversity, and thus ingenuity. It is the opportunity for interaction that promotes the system's development (Ibid).

An organization's ingenuity derives from "the nature of human inventiveness and understanding" (p. 3) enabled by their connectedness. Relationships, developed and nurtured, within organizations are central to organizational learning: "the pathways to the intelligence of the system" (Wheatley, 2007, p. 40). Information generated within such an environment is made more relevant; a concept more easily understood by its converse – information's diminished relevance owing to the lost 'personality' of electronic communiqué (Lanier, 2006). Complexity, and therefore diversity, creativity, ingenuity, and, perhaps most importantly, trust, derive from the quality of interpersonal interactions within organizations (the system), particularly in times of tumult and uncertainty (Ibid). Environments in which trusting, respectful acceptance dominates have the capacity and energy to cultivate robust connections that resist external pressures and give heart to qualities such as collaboration and healthy risk-taking, which is requisite to innovation. The system exists, with or without design; it is up to organizational leaders to provide a medium for its direction and maturation. Serious leadership admonitions, with respect to the development of unhealthy systems, are illustrated by commentary in the midst of the global economic crisis of 2008. Greenspan, former chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, refers to a staggering lack of discernment regarding risk inherent in the complexity of global financial "web of interconnections" (Greenspan, as cited in MacDonald, 2008) as a major cause. It is essential that educational leaders understand such connections and the risks implicit in failing to nurture robust systems rooted in healthy relationships, reliable information and sound knowledge, and the



potential harm from systems which fail to thrive. It strikes me that much of the faculty grumbling, complacently accepted as ubiquitous, is symptomatic of such un-nurtured systems and should be explored rather than ignored.

Kay (2007), in response to the question, "If you had the power to change a single thing about Canada, what would it be?" (p. A18), points to institutions of higher-learning, deferring to the Liberal Arts College of Montreal's Concordia University (LAC) mission statement, which includes the following:

The LAC is devoted to the life of the mind. Students and faculty in the College's demanding and unique program form a community of learners, seeking a better understanding of the complex relationships between ideas, reality and the pursuit of truth (Kay, 2007, p. A18).

LAC's pronouncement contrasts sharply to the eminently practical mission statements of BC's university colleges<sup>50</sup>, which fail to achieve the depth

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<sup>50</sup> BC's university college mission statements:

Malaspina University College:

"Malaspina University-College is a dynamic and diverse educational organization, dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, service and research. We foster student success, strong community connections and international collaboration by providing access to a wide range of university and college programs designed for regional, national and international students. Approved as amended by the Malaspina University-College Board of Governors September 28, 2006"

<http://www.mala.ca/mission.asp> [Accessed December 10, 2007]

Kwantlen University College:

"We create an exceptional learning environment committed to preparing learners for leadership, service and success." <http://www.kwantlen.ca/about.html> [Accessed December 10, 2007]

University College of the Fraser Valley:

"The fundamental purpose of UCFV is to provide a superb learning experience for our students. We provide our students and the rapidly growing Fraser Valley region with:

- Excellence in teaching and research
- A supportive, professional and respectful learning environment
- Innovative, distinctive and comprehensive programming
- Education directed towards both personal and career development
- Beneficial local, national and international partnerships"

<http://www.ucfv.ca/crd/Strat-Plan2004/strategicplanning-document.htm> [Accessed December 10, 2007]

demonstrated by LAC's public recognition given to "the complex relationships between ideas, reality, and the pursuit of truth" (Ibid). Mission statements are a declaration of institutional values; the university college mission statements may unwittingly reveal an environment in which the 'life of the mind' has little value. The essence of LAC's mission statement is in keeping with a theme central to this study – the value of embracing reality, our phenomenal world, without fleeing or flinching in the face of uncertainty and uncomfortable truths – and by doing so achieving some of LAC's 'truth.' This chapter is undertaken with a view to informing leaders of inconsistencies at a time and place in which diversity, inclusiveness, and cooperation are presumed. Yet, we observe more individualism than communion in academic departments that are structurally reliant on the goodwill and cooperation of their members.

*individualism...*

"Individualized identity" (Taylor, 1992, p. 28), which is heart of individualism and a central premise of modernity, is described by Taylor as being truly one's self in self-expression and self-fulfilment. But along some imagined scale, measuring degrees of individual expression, there is a point beyond which an individual becomes over-absorbed with self. I do not attempt to determine where that point is, but recognize, as Taylor posits and Bibby's surveys surmise, that western society has collectively moved in the direction of radical individualism. The contemporaneous movement towards radical individualism and away from a sense of community has significant implications

for Canadian institutions (Bibby, 2007), particularly in flat organizations which, by their nature, require collaboration and cooperation. The question then arises: how do seemingly mutually exclusive characteristics such as individuality and cooperation coexist and flourish in horizontal configurations?

To understand human beliefs, behaviours, and actions, an appreciation of human complexities and emerging individualism – an individual sense of identity – is imperative (Taylor, 1992). So too, mindful leaders must cultivate an understanding of what it is to live in today's phenomenal world; to this end, I examine the how's and why's of radical individualism and its implications for individuals and their organizations. Contemporary individualism, arising out a sense of one's rights, of free will and choice, of self-fulfilment and self-expression, Taylor argues, is beset by 'disenchantment' with the 'establishment' – community, culture, religion, state, mythology, and nature even (Taylor, 1991) in Canadian society. Our fixation on simplicity and relativism, rather than teasing out the nuances of complex ideas, in concert with a predilection for efficiency – originating with the concept of 'secular time' – has far reaching consequences reflected in a culture of antipathy towards states of nature to states of affairs (Ibid). Consider environmental degradation resulting from the singular pursuit of profits or the widening gap between the world's rich and poor, considered to be partially attributable to global commerce and western antipathy. This type of thinking has significant import, from urbanites' disconnection from the origins of their food, and thus land – an expression of our increasingly urbanized environment, to a parallel disconnect, occasioned by

complex economic formulae, with the origins of wealth, their technological aggregation and application eventualities lost even on financial experts. The global credit crisis, illustrative of radical individualism manifest in ‘shallow’ comprehension and the means-end logic of instrumental reason – focussing on efficiency and immediacy in the pursuit of goals, irrespective of salient factors or their impact on others – are sadly representative of individualism’s ‘phoney ideal’ perpetuated by Canada’s (amongst other nations) ‘miserable leadership’ (Sachs, 2008).

It can be said that the movement towards individualism, tumbling out of the dawn of humanism<sup>51</sup> and demise of Middle Ages’ enchantment<sup>52</sup>, has taken an ironic twist. Beset by disillusionment with the sacrosanct societal order of the past, membership in community, political, religious, or service organizations has fallen to historic lows in society<sup>53</sup>. Moral ideals, now generally viewed as internally derived functions of relativism, were once rooted in zeitgeist theism, divine authority, and ‘natural time,’ whereby one’s identity, regardless of social status, was driven by conformance to these mores. Stark distinctions between right and wrong were imposed upon individuals from the outside – religious teachings, the community, and the state. The value of individual choice and

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<sup>51</sup> This is not without controversy; in general terms, there is concurrence that humanism refers back to classical traditions (citing Petrarch) of secularism and personal fulfilment. Yet, “Medievalists see humanism as the terminal product of the Middle Ages. Modern historians are perhaps more apt to view humanism as the germinal period of modernism.”  
<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/humanism.html> [Accessed October 6, 2009]

<sup>52</sup> The cultural ethos of the time being bound in theism, divine power, and zeitgeist conformance.

<sup>53</sup> Modernity’s expression in Canadian society is evident in responses to Reginald Bibby’s national trends survey, wherein Canadians generally report moving away from a sense of legacy, deference to authority, and loyalty to organizations or community, and towards individualism, secularism, instant gratification, and pluralism (Bibby, 2007).

questioning conformity, often attributed to Rousseau<sup>54</sup> (Taylor, 1992), developed into Taylor's "ethic of authenticity" (Taylor, 1991, p. 25), shaping who we are today. Authenticity, in this sense, may be considered our sense of self, our identity, our individualism – who we are and what we think – our sense of being authentic to ourselves, rather than to the clamour outside our own personhood. Suggesting people heed their unique inner voice (and ear) without exclusive reference to others' canon, ethics or principles further developed into what is commonly referred to as the 20<sup>th</sup> century aesthetic frame of reference. By adopting the merits of art, elitist sentiments attach to the artistic and thereby confer value on creativity; an ideal persisting in the present day ethic of authenticity (Ibid). It can be argued that this was manifest in the misperception of artists and their 'socialite elitist' devotees, which factored into the 2008 curtailment of Canadian federal funding of the arts. This type of thinking, the antithesis of mindful thought and action, suggests some shallowness on the part of our leaders (Jacobe, 2008). Taylor explains these concepts in de-layering the concept of identity; he assumes Lionel Trilling's understanding of 'authenticity' – the concept of being true to oneself – a characterization of today's "individualized identity" (Taylor, 1992, p. 28).

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<sup>54</sup> Taylor considers that "The most important philosophical writer who helped to bring about this change was Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (Taylor, 1992, p. 29) in referring to self awareness and authenticity; being aware of our moral feelings (Ibid, p. 28). While there is some controversy about whether Rousseau sparked change, Taylor suggests that he did not cause these changes, but certainly articulated it. "Rousseau frequently presents the issue of morality as that of our following a voice of nature within us. This voice is often drowned out by the passions that are induced by our dependence on others, the main one be amour propre, or pride. Our moral salvation comes from recovering authentic moral contact with ourselves" (Ibid, p. 29).

Modernity's mobility, growth, and geographic concentration of people<sup>55</sup> and power and the interconnectedness and, paradoxically, the reduction of personal interactions that arises thereof, conspire to make a society susceptible to individualistic tendencies. Technological advances, fuelling communications and transportation, in turn facilitate economic flexibility and mobility. Increased mobility increases opportunity yet severs connections, not only from place, but also from family, community, culture, traditions, and shared values and heritage – their home<sup>56</sup>. As this way of life becomes mainstream, it reinforces, and thus perpetuates more of the same (Taylor, 1991). In Taylor's (1991) 'trivialized' version of authenticity, the extreme self-expression of individuality – reflected in rampant consumerism, narcissism, secularism, and dissociation from community, heritage and culture translates into what many perceive to be a disintegrating society. Yet, he argues, striving for self-fulfilment and searching for means of self-expression may coalesce in a 'higher' form of the ethic of authenticity (Ibid). In contrast, radical individualism is marked by its vulnerability to atomism<sup>57</sup> and moral relativism<sup>58</sup>. By avoiding the dialectic or consideration of complex ideas, society fundamentally graduates from authenticity to relativism, with non-judgemental liberalism and atomism supplanting the capacity of individuals to even comprehend complex issues

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<sup>55</sup> It is said that in 2009 half of the world's population will, for the first time, be living under urban conditions.

<sup>56</sup> Fellow colleagues, in elementary education, posit that student mobility, particularly in 'inner city' schools, is a major factor in students' inability to flourish in the school system.

<sup>57</sup> Personal autonomy marked by a separation from heritage and community.

<sup>58</sup> The concept of accepting all points of view as equally acceptable.

(Taylor, 1991). Further, in the obsessive quest for individualism, our sense of autonomy can distort our perspective on community by discounting society's sway. The desire for individualism and independence, seeking only self satisfaction, ignores "the web of interlocution" (Taylor, 1989, p. 39) within which we are all socially immersed. Thus, the shallow version of individualism, characterized by behaviours committed to self-fulfilment – creativity, originality, and non-conformance – without regard for the expression of ideas (dialogue) or concrete awareness of "horizons of significance" (Taylor, 1991, p. 38), diminishes one's readiness to articulate, reflect upon, or appropriately weigh the issues. For instance, attributing the same significance to money spent on funding a shelter for people in desperate circumstances, to purchasing yet another cellular phone for oneself, exemplifies shallow thinking, its prevalence sadly perpetuating the trivial ethic of authenticity. To further clarify this construct, consider the irony in an age of self-expression, arising out relativistic tenets not to criticise others' ideas. Such tacit avoidance also contributes to a 'shallower existence,' eventually diminishing one's wherewithal to focus on and articulate ideas. People, fixated with individuality, become preoccupied with pettiness as they fail to engage in deeper thought, thus diminishing the richness of life experiences (Ibid). Paradoxically, as individualism proliferates it compels more conformance to its own cause. "It is a critique that has often been made of modern consumer society that it tends to breed a herd of conformist individuals" (Taylor, 1989, p. 40). Lanier<sup>59</sup> (2006) indicates that such behaviours, enabled and exacerbated by

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<sup>59</sup> Jaron Lanier: "...did coin the term 'Virtual Reality'... he has collaborated broadly with researchers

communication technologies, are infiltrating large organizations in a circularity that is both influenced by, and influences, greater society. This, he suggests, is disturbing given that collective technologies fuel the “loss of insight and subtlety, a disregard for the nuances of ‘considered opinions’” (Lanier, 2006, p. 5). This shallow thinking becomes aggregated in centralized thinking and decisions: for instance millions of North Americans ‘voting’ for the ‘best’ entertainer (rather than in political elections) Lanier wryly comments, distorts the ability of real talent to emerge (Ibid). Ironically, places of higher learning are not immune to the trend towards trivializing complex ideas. Platforms for, or spontaneous incidences of, deep discourse are increasingly rare.

However, quelling conventional notions that individualism is to blame for all of society’s ills, modernity also proffers “the rise of new principles of sociality” (Taylor, 2004, p. 18). One expects the “rise of ‘individualism’ at the expense of ‘community’” (Ibid, p. 17). However, the reciprocity of mutual agency between individuals assures cooperation for their mutual benefit. Consider that, even in a society comprised of extreme individualists, they nonetheless do not live outside of society – the quintessence of human interdependence in *webs of interlocution*, described by Henley as a type of

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in machine vision, computational neuroscience, cell biology modeling, and other disciplines defining the border between human cognition and the rest of the world. He also is working with physicists on “digital” approaches to fundamental theories...He was the Chief Scientist of the Engineering Office of Internet2 in the 1990s...In 2005 Lanier was selected as one of the top one hundred public intellectuals in the world by Prospect and Foreign Policy magazines. The Encyclopaedia Britannica includes him in its list of history's 300 or so greatest inventors. The nation of Palau has issued a postage stamp in his honor." From: <http://www.jaronlanier.com/general.html> [Accessed September 22, 2008]



'communion,' in which we, and the environment in which we are immersed, are all interconnected (Henley, 2006). Authenticity, in both its versions, is not just a description of individualism but a feature of individualism incorporated into society and the form it takes, a characteristic of modernity that plays into organizational cultures and environments. So it is that flat organizations are essentially governed by individualistic, independent peers who, personifying individualism and self-reliance, nonetheless take on social and administrative responsibilities in the interest of community. As it ultimately manifests in our relationships, an understanding of individualism leads to a richer understanding of who we are and what drives us (Taylor, 1991). For flat organizations to continue to succeed it is essential that the goodwill, associated with higher forms of authenticity, prevails and is nurtured; unfortunately, while crucial, it is afforded little recognition and, sadly, is often exploited. My intention is to inform mindful leadership at a time when, it seems, complacency pervades organizational thinking. Given that we cannot count on attendant goodwill, it is worthwhile to examine possible outcomes in its absence in the collective presumptions we hold to be true, primarily in the form of rankism, to be explored further in the next chapter.

*collective presumptions we hold to be true...*

One manifestation of shallow thinking is reflected in the ease with which thinking becomes what we accept to be 'conventional' without first interrogating its veracity. Conventional belief, for instance, in the 'myth of meritocracy' –

assuming reward or recognition is meritorious, thus commensurate with effort and ability – is pervasive. This presumes a ‘level playing field’ with all members given equal opportunity and competing equally (Fuller, 2003). In the competition for recognition, the greatest impediment, Fuller argues, is rankism. The very nature of rank and recognition assures advantages of one sort of rank translate into unrelated advantages. Consider the latitude afforded celebrities, politicians, or executives in the face of wrongdoing or mediocre performance, or the media’s predilection for correlating expertise with celebrity. Many employ the abuse of power to retain their unwarranted status and associated benefits from unwelcome challenge, whether or not valid, by subordinates or peers. In consequence, those deemed of lower rank have more difficulty in improving their station than high-ranking individuals (Ibid), a phenomenon not lost upon women and visible minorities who bump up against the glass ceiling.

When individualism is radicalized and becomes grasping individuals become overly self-absorbed, coveting their rights, freedoms, and sense of self-entitlement over others; this, on its own accord fuels the propensity to ‘rank.’ Should such conduct present itself and meet with tolerance, in the college environs, it becomes particularly insidious. In an overly flat environment in which democracy, egalitarianism, and meritocracy are presumed to dominate and, on the other hand, the means by which to intervene or manage are remiss, or considered intrusive, it is imperative that rankism is identified, challenged, and eradicated. An organizational culture that tolerates rankism creates the ideal breeding ground for undemocratic behaviour and further perpetuates rankist

behaviour. Eliminating rankism and moderating radical individualism is fundamental to democratic practice, as we “bring the core principle of democracy – the idea of mutual accountability and non-rankist service – to all our social institutions” (Fuller, 2003, p. 9). This is particularly relevant in educational institutions, which bear an extraordinary level of social responsibility for furthering democracy and thus should be mindful of their own practices. That they significantly influence the quality of democratic deliberation and practice in society, in part shouldering responsibility for shaping politically adroit citizens, is widely accepted (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Osborne, 2001). While the core of this particular supposition lies beyond the scope of this research, Gutmann and Thompson point to the contribution that educational institutions make to the quality of governance and how we agree to be governed in Canada:

In any effort to make democracy more deliberative, the single most important institution outside government is the educational system... Schools should aim to develop their students’ capacities to understand different perspectives, communicate their understandings to other people, and engage in the give-and-take of moral argument with a view to making mutually acceptable decisions (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 359).

While we hold our students to such high ideals, I suggest that many in special purpose teaching universities do not recognize the presence of rankism within its faculty community, nor its prevalence. Comfortable in their own social imaginary, and subject to modernity’s influences in their sense of individualism

and meritocracy, individuals are blinded to others' truths and their own actions. An overarching sense of goodwill, in the cooperation, collaboration, and deliberation central to the success of flat organizations, is to be valued rather than jeopardized by the vagaries of uncontested human behaviours that weaken "webs of interdependence"<sup>60</sup> (Homer-Dixon, 2000, p. 103) and give rise to communities more vulnerable to modernity's externalities. To this end, I look to the promise and reality of democratic practice in the macro of broader Canadian society, and the micro of the peer administered academic department.

*the promise and reality of democratic practice...*

I now look at broader Canadian society to see how democratic practices are reflected in, and in turn influence, our individual social imaginaries and are incorporated into practices within institutions of higher education. To do this, I look to the conduct of our parliamentarians and to some systemic processes common to communities and organizations that self-define their decision-making as democratic, as in peer administered academic departments.

Democracy is neither achieved nor demonstrated by merely following process, as this "can be used to foster democracy or to cripple it" (Osborne, 2001, p. 47). In contrast, cultures that are inclusive and respectful set the stage for deliberation, which may indeed be raucous providing ideas are at its centre, argues Saul<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Homer-Dixon describes "webs of interdependence" (Homer-Dixon, 2000, p. 103), in which systems develop, for instance organizations interact and share with each other, proliferate, grow, diversify, and thus prosper, on the basis of quality interconnections and relationships (Homer-Dixon, 2000).

<sup>61</sup> John Ralston Saul's comments, during the debate: *Our Democracy is Broken: How do we fix it?* Hosted by the CPAC parliamentary broadcaster and Maclean's magazine (How to fix democracy, 2009).

(How to fix democracy, 2009). Much is made of parliamentary civility, or lack thereof; however, Saul, and many others, suggest it is not argument to which Canadians object, but the lack of substance and deliberation – the absence of genuine debate. Although the democratic model ostensibly applies at all levels of Canadian government and organizations, undemocratic behaviour persists. The democratic prerogative, of which Canadians seem so certain, appears to be a casual one if measured by levels of engagement, conduct or active participation; with deliberation disassociated from the ballot. It appears that the electorate and leaders alike share this view, given historically low voter participation; the cancellation of the 2008 fall sitting of the BC Legislature (Fowlie, 2008) and the decidedly inadequate thirty-minute question-period; or, in Parliament, the thirty-five second limit of question period responses, and the now routine ‘policy’ of opposing members leaving the House when others speak, which all contrive to do away with debate. An extreme version of this is demonstrated in the prorogation of Parliament for what is considered to be the supercilious reasoning of a minority government, resistant to deliberating issues that may reflect poorly on the government of the day, and the means to control committees, the Senate, and pending legislation. Parliamentary committees’ members, while obsequious to their own, are increasingly disrespectful to opposing members, with the progressively obstructionist tone appearing to intentionally obfuscate rather than clarify (Malloy, 2010, p. A13). Broadbent<sup>62</sup> (How to fix democracy, 2009)

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<sup>62</sup> Excerpt of the panel discussion, Our Democracy is Broken: How do we fix it? (How to fix democracy, 2009).

speaks to the lack of civility pervasive in exchanges between parliamentarians – the caustic rhetoric that, he feels, contributes to voter apathy. Consider the broader implications, the lassitude of democracy in an individualistic, self-absorbed society reflected in the shabby simplicity (Taylor, 1991) and tone of parliamentarians’ “banal, dull, stupid speeches...” (How to fix democracy, 2009), which some have suggested are worthy of Mr. Dressup<sup>63</sup> (Black, 2009). Missing in our penchant for casting a vote, beyond modernity’s sway, is the critical process of deliberation that informs a sense of accountability and reciprocity. Consider the drift towards leader-centricity now so extreme that party leaders speak for and direct the actions of Members of Parliament (MPs) or Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). According to Anderson (2009), this centralization of power is “robbing us of the diversity of views and the variety of expression that exists in Canadian politics...to the point where everyone thinks of them as trained seals” (Anderson, p. C2). Jonathan Malloy<sup>64</sup> cautions that, at a time when “the larger spirit” (Malloy, 2010, p. A13) of parliamentary deliberation appears forgotten, “Parliament has become more important and central than ever” (Ibid).

Former Prime Minister Campbell (Campbell, 2003) and former Deputy Prime Minister Copps (Copps, 2004) observe that our contributions to

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<sup>63</sup> The former comment refers to Opposition Leader, Michael Ignatieff, by Andrew Coyne of Maclean’s magazine from an excerpt of the panel discussion, *Our Democracy is Broken: How do we fix it?* (How to fix democracy, 2009). The latter, to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, by Arthur Black (Black, 2009); both Parliamentarians are known to be intelligent, educated, and articulate.

<sup>64</sup> “Jonathan Malloy is a professor of political science and public policy and administration at Carleton University” (Malloy, 2010, A13).

governance reflects our collective character. Exclusive emphasis on 'voting' diminishes the spirit of democracy, failing to observe the "[c]onsideration, reflection, doubt and debate ... of representative assemblies" (Saul, 1995, pp. 108-109). With direct democracy's emphasis on 'the vote,' the electorate's mandate appears limited to just that – casting a vote (Ibid) and there appears to be a corresponding understanding in the instrumentalism of their representative's role in snaring it. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish democratic practice, reflected in deliberation, from the voting process and to revisit an essential of democratic practice: empowerment by inclusion. Democratic practice rests on "the collective wisdom that *emerges* from mutual inquiry, consultation, and deliberation" (Bai, 2001, p. 308), purposing towards the common good. Democratic power, devolving from democratic practice, is rooted in interpersonal relationships, the antithesis of radical individuality (Ibid); it is community based and dialogically driven. Without these foundational qualities, democratic practice cannot thrive. The word 'emerge' is central; contrary to conventional thinking that agreement inevitably arises out of a common goal, Bai suggests common goals emerge from the meeting and sharing of minds. Neither democratic deliberation nor the sharing of emotions or experiences can exist in isolation; it is a dialogic process, which requires meeting and talking; it is essential that people "come together and undertake the process of inquiry, consultation, and deliberation" (Ibid, pp. 309-310).

While neither goodwill nor interpersonal clarity can be imposed on others, the 'coming together' can be facilitated; here the synergy of clear leadership can

assist, literally coordinating the “spaces of empowerment” (Solomon & Allen, 2001, p. 226) so that the discourse can begin. Consider, for instance, the simplicity of leaders assuring the practicalities – scheduling, space, and time – for meeting. Followers then have a venue, a ‘space,’ for face-to-face discussions, for communion. I have posed that disrespectfulness and the reluctance to engage in the dialectic is problematic in our democratic systems, with individuals, unwilling to deliberate or share information, hiding behind their rights of expression. While indispensable to the process, it is essential that providing for the practicalities does not instrumentally overshadow a central premise – that of inclusion.

*inclusion...*

Social diversity ideation is complex and has many facets to consider: age, appearance, disability, ethnicity, faith, gender, politics, and status, to name a few. This exploration is not intended as an exhaustive examination of the amalgam that is Canada, yet as diversity issues impact the lives of all citizens and institutions they command attention. Consider the implications to our mosaic – a predominantly immigrant population borne out of modernity’s externalities and a small native population – in which white, male, authority figures prevail. Experientially we know that gender and cultural diversity benefit organizations by bringing fresh ideas, different perspectives, and innovative ideas to problem solving; an understanding that is well proven, according to Ibrahim<sup>65</sup> (as cited in

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<sup>65</sup> Bakr Ibrahim, associate dean of the John Molson School of Business, Concordia University



Nebenzahl, 2007). Special purpose teaching universities play a larger role than most in the education, socialization, and training of our diverse population, often providing primary services to citizens and newcomers, such as accessibility to education, skills training, literacy, and language proficiency. This exploration is limited to influences and demands introduced into the college environs by ethnic and gender issues, and their unpleasant counterparts – racism and sexism – along with a discussion of other ‘isms’ we regularly encounter, yet rarely discuss, and the capacity of organizational leaders to respond. A broader examination of diversity is beyond the scope of this project, yet an interrogation of prejudices borne out of individual social imaginaries is fundamental to understanding these ‘isms’ and their incompatibility with democratic deliberation, and will be explored in the next chapter.

*implications of communication technologies...*

If democracy celebrates deliberation, it then holds that inclusion and communication are fundamental to a robust democratic culture. However, concepts of content, quality, relevance, immediacy, and privacy are being increasingly redefined, not through deliberation but by zeitgeist technologies. Technology impinges on virtually all communications between community members – administrators, faculty, staff, and students – stressing patience and resources. Strategic directives filter down, for implementation from deans to faculty, increasingly through electronic media – email, intranet and social networking sites – which, according to Daniel Woolf, University of Alberta’s

Dean of Arts, represents an extraordinarily “blunt instrument” for “meaningful exchange” (Mauthe, 2008, p. EJ18). Personal interaction – face-to-face or even by telecommunication – is essential to meaningful discourse (Ibid). Lanier opines on the diminished quality and relevance of aggregated data, even though accurate, which loses ‘voice’ as it is repeated. The information itself loses tone, becoming increasingly flaccid as it moves further from its originator, losing energy and ‘personality’ (Lanier, 2006). While email may indeed be ‘blunt,’ it at least owns some characteristic of voice – expressing some personality (Ibid), whereas meta-sites provide substantial information at its expense. Such resources – institutional intranets for instance – provide little potential for inspiration and, overwhelmed by the surfeit of electronic data some faculty, chaffing against yet another solitary time-consuming exercise, view it as a burden rather than a resource.

An underlying ethos of suspicion surrounding this type of communication is understandable considering the repercussions of missed deadlines and mistakes arising from ambiguous, overlooked, or misinterpreted electronic missives and recipients’ powerlessness to clarify, contribute, or respond. Systemic insistence on their sufficiency adds insult to injury in communicating information with implied demands for compliance, in an affected tone of inclusiveness. It is important to recognize that, whether or not contrived,

ineffective communiqués, particularly impersonal modes of communication, tend to generate negative responses<sup>66</sup>.

Pervasively ineffective internal communications, with their attendant want of ‘understanding’ and collective angst, are attributable to this technological drag, particularly in large academic or faculty departments and multi-campus institutions. Administrative edicts, dispatched electronically, alongside a plethora of other messages and data from multiple sources, leads to a crushing volume of information, not only in number and complexity, but also due to the numerous and varied electronic sites and web pages in which they may be circulated. I have observed exasperated faculty, at the mercy of a system impervious to clarification and inherently devoid of personal contact, exhibit signs of stress in impatient, uncooperative, and disrespectful behaviours directed at deans, students, and each other. Being thus “nobodyed” (Fuller, 2003, p. 4) and subjected to another’s insidious behaviour serving to diminish, threaten, or force conformance (Ibid), hinders a sense of collegiality and impairs cooperation amongst faculty. Deans, on the other hand, believe information to be adequately disseminated and are bewildered at the depth of faculties’ antipathy. The reliance on electronic media is understandable, particularly considering excessive workloads and unwieldy logistics. The ‘blunt instrument’ of electronic communications media has proven highly efficient in disseminating data, yet

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<sup>66</sup> Grossman and Milgrom’s *disclosure principle* asserts that information inadequately communicated is generally interpreted negatively or with suspicion. This arises out of *moral hazard* issues—the inability to observe the actions of the informant—and is thus subject to *adverse selection* – information manipulated to the disadvantage of the recipient – who, in the absence of positive news, assumes the informer has a self-interested, or some other negative, motive for withholding information (Scott, W., 2003).

equally problematic in promoting understanding or furthering the consultative process; it is as if trust and motivation is somehow lost in the process. These circumstances contrive to further encumber the cooperation and collaboration requisite to democratic practice – the presumed administrative model at the core of faculty peer administration.

Much has been made of the democratization of information in the public sphere, particularly in light of new phenomena such as ‘citizen journalism’, fuelled by individualism and made possible by evolving communications technologies. Yet, this presents a particular paradox; we value the information derived from such sources but the value of that information is diminished by the same mechanism. The very elements of modernity enabling this phenomenon also devalue it via the vehicle of its distribution, which allows for sensational and inaccurate reporting, and the undifferentiated ability of uninformed and informed amateurs to participate in the discourse. The use of analyses or commentary published through electronic media, rather than credible journals, allows “little time for measured thought” (Daum, 2009, p. C4). The propensity of interest groups with a particular truth to ‘prove,’ further diminishes the value of information. This concept is illustrated in the interpretation, dissemination, and ultimate use of archaeological findings which cast doubts on the value of information disseminated by interest groups using archaeological findings to

support the 'truth' of religious text<sup>67</sup> (Sylvester, 2007). The simultaneous strengthening and weakening of access to information derives from the same source, a paradox which leadership should be considering given the plethora of new technologies geared to the collective mindset. The thinkers of our day are already warning of this phenomenon's capacity to inhibit deep reflection and authentic deliberation.

An interesting juxtaposition is presented by Lanier (2006), who coined the term, 'virtual reality,' and was the lead scientist in the development of Internet2<sup>68</sup>. The apparent contradiction of his thesis, on the inherent hazards of technological collectivism and the data aggregation capabilities of meta-sites such as Wikipedia, lies in his immersion in collective technologies – being the architect. Lanier opines on the 'collective stupidity' of the 'hive mind' – collective consciousness or group-think – perpetuated by the Internet (Ibid), contrary to conventional confidence in the 'the wisdom of crowds;' a profound contradiction. Complex problems, such as global economic or climate crises, may be addressed by such an unregulated collective theoretically, but, given

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<sup>67</sup> A CBC radio panel of eminent archaeologists and academics discussing the interpretation, dissemination, and ultimate use of archaeological findings to support particular 'truths' put forward by special interest groups. "Guest Host Kevin Sylvester in conversation about the uses and abuses of Archaeology. His guests are: In New York Uzma Rizvi, is a visiting instructor at the Pratt Institute in New York and a PhD at the University of Pennsylvania as well as being a performance artist and rap DJ; In Washington, Eric Cline, Chair of the Department of Classical and Semitic Languages and Literatures at The George Washington University; in Chapel Hill, Jodi Magness, is the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism at the University of North Carolina; in Madison, Gordon Govier, and editor and executive producer and host of the radio program, The Book and The Spade, a weekly program devoted to Biblical Archaeology." (Sylvester, December 16, 2007) From: <http://www.cbc.ca/thesundayedition/latestshow.html>

<sup>68</sup> "Internet2 is a not-for-profit advanced networking consortium comprising more than 200 U.S. universities in cooperation with 70 leading corporations, 45 government agencies, laboratories and other institutions of higher learning as well as over 50 international partner organizations." <http://www.internet2.edu/about> [Accessed September 30, 2008]

impractically long time frames, are more likely to require some sort of political intervention. The ring of familiarity resounding herein derives from history; consider, modernity's march, whereby, in the scheme of things, unanticipated consequences of technological advances have shaped social development (Ibid). I suspect that Luddites recognized this phenomenon long before others.

Lanier questions the conventional wisdom of the archetypically democratic collective; "empowering the collective does not empower individuals—just the reverse is true" (Lanier, 2006). The Internet collective, represented by wiki's, social utility and meta sites, creates an environment where energetic individuals can inundate the decision-making process with input or, conversely enables collective forging ahead, at times at a manic pace, in support of their cause with little analysis or substantiation, inclusion, and deliberation. There is no doubt that the Internet gives voice to the masses; clearly evidenced in the US 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama. Thousands of social networking sites, in turn spawning more self-perpetuating systems, generated real action by American citizens to support his cause. It will be interesting to follow this phenomenon, unparalleled in Canada, to see whether Canadians also generate powerful technologically-based political passions in the future, and how the unity of a common purpose diversifies and is channelled to disparate causes as the system matures.

Lanier (2006) warns against blindly adopting a collective mindset whereby individual creativity, intellect, richness, and mutual respect for diverse viewpoints are diminished. Essentially, the collective has the potential to

undermine accountability and responsibility, as individuals hide behind the technology or collective's mandate (Lanier, 2006). Newman and Grigg (2008) observe this in "equality focused teams" (Newman & Grigg, 2008, p. F6) which, rather than embrace diverse opinions and address conflicting ideas, underperform as individual contributions remain unexplored, and analysis or debate is avoided in favour of quickly reaching consensus. My colleagues and I can attest to this phenomenon. In peer administered departments generally, little time is set aside for deliberation, even of complex issues; decisions are made quickly with 'the vote' prematurely foisted upon members, by members. The pervasiveness of such profoundly undemocratic conduct and its efficacy in silencing members is staggering. The self-serving behaviour of a few, under the guise of expediency, contributes urgency to the process and brings deliberation abruptly to an end; the vote is taken and action implemented, often to be revisited later in light of its inadequacy. The implications for humankind, already biologically and sociologically predisposed to herd behaviour<sup>69</sup>, increasingly immersed in such aggregative technology in synchrony with 'hive mind' extremism, is concerning (Lanier, 2006). This has played out throughout history, perpetuated by the multitude and enabled by the technology of the day,

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<sup>69</sup> Dobbs, an award winning author, writes on culture, ecology, medicine, and science, in the journal, *Scientific American Mind*, discusses new findings on the brain's structure, identifying mirror neurons responsible for the seemingly simple act of mimicry. Explicating on the research at the University of Parma, Italy; University of Groningen (Netherlands); University of Southern California; and the University of California, the discovery of a biological component to behaviour has profound implications in the understanding of cultural development. Due to their function in the understanding of others, the authors hypothesize that mirror neurons may be the anthropological driving force (beginning some 50,000 years ago) in the human development of social skills, and social and knowledge networks, thus contributing to human cultural development and conformance behaviours (Dobbs, 2006).

yet such tumult may be calmed by democratic practice rooted in deliberation, which relaxes the impetus for immediate action (Ibid).

One aspect of Lanier's (2006) thesis, the primacy of the individual scholar over the collective, highlights the susceptibility of special purpose teaching universities to such opportunism. Pointing to moderating elements of universities' tenure systems and a veiling philosophy – advancement based solely on merit – Lanier articulates yet another unanticipated consequence attending the dynamics of change in college environs. Based more on union mores, philosophically geared to the collective rather than individual or scholarly endeavours, special purpose teaching universities differ from universities proper, forswearing tenure-tracking and emphasizing teaching over research. It is disconcerting to admit that, in some regards, the agent of meritocracy is limited as a result.

Further, it is possible that the unionized structure provides an avenue for deans to avoid responsibility, or to avoid challenging the status quo, by attributing limited resolve to union imposition, much the way individuals within a collective hide behind technology and mandate. As managers, with limited resources and support, they may be fundamentally disinterested in mounting challenges, thus leaving few alternatives to managing their divisions; 'macro-managing' through peer administered academic departments then appears increasingly promising. The movement away from direct supervision (micro-management) has evolved into extreme macro-management, or "management by deeming" (Mintzberg, 2006, p. 2) whereby broad initiatives, credited to inspired



leaders, are imposed upon employees without substantive consultation, guidance, or resources. Society's predilection for strong leadership, Mintzberg argues, elevates individuality over "communityship" (Ibid, p. 1) in organizations and society at large. The very drivers of individualism serve, in this context, to disempower individual faculty members, as education councils or senates, and board of governors impose institutional objectives upon departmental deans in the form of broad initiatives, to be assigned to peer administered academic departments for implementation. This example of faculty left to their own device is becoming more common in our workplace—a situation of management inattention, inadequate training, and insufficient knowledge that exacerbates the pressures of additional duties already imposed on employees (Sennett, 2007). Within the college environs, we find ourselves immersed in a society that boasts of rewarding effort, which we readily do for our students, but are prevented from any small enjoyment of the same in a union culture that systematically denies avenues for recognition. I have observed deans attempt to recognize exceptional educators only to have union representatives succinctly and quickly close the discussion, citing management intrusiveness. Faculty members apply themselves with alacrity; however, prolonged levels of commitment and energy are difficult to sustain, particularly given the want of recognition, common to other workplaces, in the form of awards, bonuses, and other perks.

*the need for recognition...*

The human need for, and right to, recognition reverberates throughout the works of Bai (2001), Bushe (2001), Fuller (2003), and Taylor (1989, 1991, 1992, 2004). Conduct, devoid of respect, inclusion, fairness and reciprocity, whether directed towards individuals or identifiable groups, is destructive. An environment in which disrespectful conduct is tolerated enables and reinforces rankism, escalating levels of discrimination and coercion in our institutions and broader society. One's inward understanding of self is vulnerable to the 'misrecognition' and 'non-recognition' of George Herbert Mead's "significant others" (as cited in Taylor, 1992, p. 32). Taylor recognizes that "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others" (Ibid, p. 25). We signal who we are and the roles we play, as our identity emerges, through the words we use and hear. We engage in dialogical relationships, whereby "[w]e define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us" (Ibid, pp. 32-33). Lost voice, attributable to misrecognition and non-recognition, is invariably reflected in one's sense of self, often contributing to a sense of insignificance or inferiority; at times, expressed in self depreciative or destructive behaviours (Taylor, 1992). By default, one can argue that this presents itself as the perfect breeding ground for hegemonic sense of entitlement, and thus power. In extreme cases, lack of dignity may be expressed in self harm or radical forms of controlling conduct or violence which further perpetuate rankism's downward spiral, as individuals internalize and distort negative images of self.

Our inwardly derived identity, essential to democracy, is nonetheless dependent upon recognition, being “socially derived” (Ibid, p. 34). Consider, even today, natives’ struggle for recognition, acceptance, equality, and respect (Tremonti, 2008; Brown, 2008; Beaton, 2008), adults’ negative self-images growing out of abusive childhoods (Taylor, 1992), the prevalence of rankism in schools (Rook, 2007) and workplaces (Kakabadse, 2009; Fuller, 2003; Hallett, 2009), and the irony of atomistic and individualistic uncooperativeness in Canada’s civil society and collaborative organizations (Taylor, 1992). It is essential that leadership are aware of individuals’ need for recognition; that being acknowledged for individual contributions translates into a sense of inclusion and value, and motivates more of the same. Further, actively denying meritorious recognition rouses cynicism and, at its worst, exhibits forms of malevolent non-recognition that parallels rankism, far from the sense of communion vital to collaborative workplaces.

*in conclusion...*

Given our collective susceptibility to shallow and unexamined presumptions, it follows that empowered organizations must reach beyond blind confidence in the flattening model. Rather than merely imposing self-direction upon subordinates, organizational leaders are accountable for an environment that affords dignity to its membership – to be recognized and included in the deliberation, in the spirit of egalitarianism – the essence of empowerment and democracy. Faculty peers have equally important roles to play in creating an

open, communicative, and trusting environment in which Mintzberg's (1979) mutual adjustment prevails. As peer administered academic departments are self-defined as democratic, it is essential that their membership and leadership recognize that democratic practice cannot co-exist with unfettered radical individualism and rankism. In this chapter, I have considered implications to the presumed egalitarianism of peer administered academic departments. Chapter Four looks further into fundamental equality issues with which Canadian society is grappling, and which further impact, albeit at times subtlety, special purpose teaching universities, but are largely ignored. In Chapter Five, I look to possible resolutions in the form of 'clear leadership' (Bushe, 2001), guided by a "social and communal view" (Henley, 2006, p. 8).

## CHAPTER 4 EXPLORING THE SHADOW SIDE OF MODERN INSTITUTIONS

Having explored modernity's influences on special purpose teaching universities, I will draw to light some inconsistencies in what we profess to believe and what we actually practice. The idea that Canadian society is inherently egalitarian is, by and large, illusory; the operative word being 'inherently.' Indeed, we are in many ways so, yet I suggest the degree to which we believe this to be innate is problematic. In the mistaken belief that there is no 'problem,' we see no need to question our behaviours, but by not doing so we leave problematic issues of inclusiveness and equality unexamined, which is itself an example of modernity's propensity to shallowness. The work of Bai (2001), Bushe (2001), and Henley (2006), however, resounds with the need to acknowledge these weighty matters, reflect upon them, and learn the techniques and deliberative habits of the sharing and clarifying dialectic that is requisite to inclusive, respectful and trusting relationships, within which empowerment and democracy reside.

In Chapter Five, I will explicate leadership strategies that aspire to do so. In this chapter, I will elaborate on the shadow side of equality issues prevailing in society and in our organizations in the form of rankist behaviour. The antithesis of the goodwill so vital in extremely flat organizations, rankism serves not to elevate members of the community, but to diminish them; not to build a

trusting, collaborative culture, but to serve one's self; not to encourage inquiry, but to enforce instrumentalist efficiency. The collective 'we' are inclined to trivialize rankism's prevalence and effects. Our disinclination to engage in meaningful discourse – labelling rankism 'someone else's' problem – and at times, with less naïve notions, perpetuating rankism for personal gain, exacerbates the problem. Reluctantly, I look to two familiar issues – ethnicity and gender; my reticence originating in the very mechanisms at issue, the disinclination to 'rock the boat' in speaking to unpopular, yet bona fide, issues commonly viewed as overblown.

*rankism's undercurrent...*

It is likely that every person has, at some time, been unfairly subjected to the brunt of another's power and felt its attendant humiliation. Intentional acts of subjugation – the antithesis of goodwill – form the basis of prejudicial 'isms:' ageism, classism, racism, and sexism, to name a few. Although behaviours that emerge vary, these 'isms' are all manifestations of power wielded over others with the intent to humiliate (Fuller, 2003). Rankism, a term coined by Fuller, describes all such appalling behaviour; while essentially an individual act, institutional cultures may also exhibit its undercurrents (Ibid). To distinguish from 'rank' normally associated with hierarchy, consider that 'rankism' is an individual expression of conduct that is disrespectful, inequitable, and exploitative; rankism may be subtle or overtly bullying. Sadly, its harm is not

exclusively the purview of those in power positions; it may be perpetuated anytime, by anyone,

Fuller's (2003) thesis looks to the predication of power associated with rank, which may be associated with, but is not directly attributable to, appearance, gender, class, or religion. All humans are at some time or other subjected to rankism's mutable barbs, poignantly described by Fuller as being "nobodied" (Fuller, p. 4). For instance, a faculty member may humiliate a student by virtue of authority and, in turn, may be subjected to rankism by a colleague by virtue of race, gender, class or any other characteristic seen as undesirable or weak by 'social consensus'<sup>70</sup>. The student, in an expression of frustration may, in turn, intimidate a fellow student or sibling, thereby perpetuating rankism's sting (Fuller, 2003). Censure may be as capricious and trivial as condemnation of another's clothing, yet to some degree or other reflects an element of society's intolerances, reinforced by the "somebody mystique" (Ibid, p. 63) – the "psychological dimension of the social consensus that supports abuses of rank" (Ibid). Rankist behaviour may be intended to preserve perks or power, to reinforce dominance of the individual or group, or to maintain the hegemony in the belief that hierarchy is necessary to prevent chaos. The acceptance of inequity – "'life isn't fair' is the mantra of paternalism" (Ibid, p. 73). Fear of speaking up against rankist behaviour may be born of genuine fearfulness, of being perceived as disrespectful or not a team player, or may

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<sup>70</sup> Robert Fuller explains that 'social consensus' is "made up of psychology ("mindset"), politics, law" (Fuller, 2003, p. 61)

reflect a misguided attempt to support a perceived spirit of egalitarianism.

Regardless of its trigger, rankism exploits a real or perceived power imbalance to exploit, humiliate, silence, or subjugate.

Some of rankism's undertones are visible, such as the dominance of Caucasian men in authority positions. While the spectre of overt bullying may come to mind, more subtle manifestations, such as exclusion, withholding information or resources and impeding authentic discourse, or making disparaging comments in the metaphorical 'halls' of academia, are equally harmful. All derive from rankism and reach far beyond individual relationships, even "[t]he casualties of pell-mell globalization – economic and environmental – are attributable to rankism" (Fuller, 2003, p. 4), as is exclusion from the political process, which severely impact the quality of society's members' day to day existence. Although there are many forms of systemic rankism, I will limit my exploration to two social issues with which Canada is grappling – sexism and racism – and how their exclusionary subtleties infiltrate institutional decision-making. I look to those in senior positions in Canadian institutions, including government, and the contrast between who they represent and the faces of Canadians:

The absence of the voices and faces of women speaks volumes about how we encourage our children to shape a future. The absence of visible minorities except as security guards is appalling. Why should the symbols of Parliament and government be anything less than the reflection of who we are and where we come from? (Coppes, 2004, pp. 21-22).



The 2007 *Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP*, described systemic despondency partially attributable to the RCMP's 19<sup>th</sup> century command and control heritage, replete with bureaucracy and elements of racism and sexism (Mulgrew, 2007). A survey of RCMP members, conducted in 2007 by Sopow, revealed wide gender gaps reflected in the low number of female recruits and their perceptions of discriminatory or unfair treatment, often attributed to the RCMP's male-dominated, militaristic heritage (as cited in Skelton, October 29, 2007). Yet, it appears similar patterns pervade Canadian government and institutions, including those of higher learning; some are explored in this chapter.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps concludes that the lack of diverse representation in senior management and government derives from systemic biases perpetuated and exacerbated by "the preponderance of white, male faces..." (Copps, 2004, p. 11), (referring to the Press Gallery) which "did not encourage diversity of opinion. To make matters worse, they did not see any sexism" (Ibid). Sadly, Copps' comments parallel my observations in the college environs wherein incidences of rankism, obvious to an engaged observer, are ignored. We, the female members of faculty, often in closeted and hushed tones, ruminate over faculty meetings in which male colleagues over-talk and, at times, threaten. I recall, for example, a male colleague who, having reluctantly 'accepted' the task of faculty scheduling, proceeded to threaten dissenters (on an unrelated point of contention with the dean) with a 'lousy' schedule ... and then, true to his word, acted upon it. Such rankist conduct, intended to suppress

deliberation and subjugate targeted individuals, is highly effective in silencing the voice of half the community – further straining already fragile sentiments of goodwill and cooperation.

Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell emphasizes the importance of inclusiveness in spheres of power: excluding women, or other discernible groups, from the legislative process precludes their influence in forming the rules that govern society (Campbell, 2003). “So one of the ways that difference makes a difference is in terms of who makes the rules” (Campbell, p. 123). Campbell opines on leaders’ self-serving inclination to craft rules which essentially accommodate their personal circumstances, an element of ‘moral hazard’ and ‘adverse selection’ typical of any bureaucracy (Scott, 2003) devoid of transparency. How to mitigate such power advantage is addressed, theoretically, by Rawls (as cited in Campbell) by structuring institutional governance to mask leaders’ identities, thus insinuating an element of just and fair play into the agreements of governors and governed, that is "negotiated behind a 'veil of ignorance,'" meaning:

They should not know whether they are male, female, fat, thin, smart, stupid, strong, weak, disabled, and so forth. Under these circumstances, they would have to negotiate a social contract that they would be prepared to live by even if, when the veil of ignorance is lifted, they find themselves among the least advantaged (Campbell, 2003, p. 123).

In this manner, our leadership would look to address the needs of the entire community, not merely the reigning hegemony.

All, but particularly organizational leaders, must be mindful of the implications and negative consequences of rankist behaviour at all levels of their institutions. In this regard, there should be no doubt: leaders are duty-bound to curb all forms of rankism, and in order to do so many will find it necessary to look to their own conduct. Although post-secondary institutions formally recognize diversity, there appears to be little tolerance for the deliberation of uncomfortable issues. In my experience, discussions on the subject of disability, ethnicity, faith, or gender amongst faculty members are rare. I wonder at the extreme steps taken to avoid such discourse, assigning such manifest avoidance to Taylor's (1991) shallow version of authenticity and concerns, put forth by Renihan (1985), on the quality of collegiality. A question that all in post-secondary education should consider is whether we contribute to a culture that authentically embraces diversity, or merely give lip service to its ideology.

Egalitarianism manifests in equal opportunity for all, irrespective of status or internally derived *perception-generation*<sup>71</sup> (Bushe, 2001, p. 6), only with leaders' resolve (Rhode, 2003). The concept of justice being blind is ancient; whether mythological Greek (Themis) or Roman (Justitia), metaphorical images show 'Justice' with covered eyes, the implications being two-fold. Firstly, it is desirable for representatives, who speak to issues affecting our country, our organizations, our schools, our faculty, or our students, to be 'veiled' –

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<sup>71</sup> The term *perception-generation*, coined by Bushe, is explained in Chapter Five as: interpretations of emotions, observations, and sensations (Bushe, 2001); they are perpetual to, and perpetuated through, the lens of each individual's idiosyncratic social imaginary. Rarely shaped objectively, these innate characteristics are nonetheless compelling, influencing actions, behaviour and beliefs, and thus central to understanding and awareness requisite to meaningful collaboration.

shielded – from their own self-interest. I suggest this notion has practical implications residing in internal control systems, such as independent human resources departments inserted in the hiring process, often disregarded in flat paradigms. Secondly, the ideal of a ‘level playing field’ should be always a consideration. I do not intend this to refer to ‘affirmative action’ – a discussion beyond the scope of this research – merely to ideal, thus unattainable, conditions of total equality; thus, theoretically, all begin the process at hand from precisely the same position. Critics of US President Obama’s ideal of empathetic Supreme Court Justices cite the necessity of purely blind justice, in the argument against recognizing difference<sup>72</sup>. However, primatologist Frans de Waal (de Waal, 2009) refutes this notion, stating that ‘blindness’ can only be assumed when all members play on a ‘level playing field,’ otherwise the disadvantaged suffer (Wong, 2009). Neither plays into peer administration’s notion of classless egalitarianism – faculty and deans are not ‘shielded’ from acting in their own self-interest nor ‘play’ on a level playing field, which may indeed result from and contribute to a collectively shallow existence. I suggest that while we collectively value egalitarian ideals, we do not practice them as well as we would like to think. This failure to live up to our ideals is increasingly significant as our population continues its ethnic diversification, making us, according to Henry

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<sup>72</sup> Although beyond the scope of this research, there is much in the philosophy of recognizing difference, particularly in Canada. Charles Taylor speaks to this in his writing on the “politics of difference” (1992, Taylor, p. 38). and “what is today called the politics of ‘multiculturalism’” (p. 25).

Yu<sup>73</sup>, “complacent and cruel” (Yu, 2010, A15) as we point towards other societies’ discriminatory practices, while “a quick glance around at who shapes opinion and leadership decisions reveals a blinding uniformity of faces as white as driven snow” (Ibid)<sup>74</sup>. I would like to draw upon contemporary Canadian experiences to demonstrate this phenomenon in the persistence of rankist, yet generally unrecognized, undemocratic and exclusionary practices symbolic of Taylor’s (1992) misrecognition and non-recognition, particularly as Canada is home to much of the global diaspora.

*home to the diaspora...*

Canada’s population continues its ethnic diversification. The 2006 census figures confirm our population is increasing more by immigration than birthrate<sup>75</sup>. This presents both challenge and opportunity for Canadian institutions and citizens. Virk (as cited in Herar, 2007) speaks to the naivety of Canadians who consider time to be the only requirement for achieving a fully integrated society, referring to the few instances of ‘public brainstorming’ in the larger community. Though uncommon, public brainstorming, nonetheless, occurred in Quebec with the 2007-2008 Bouchard-Taylor Commission –

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<sup>73</sup> Henry Yu’s forebears immigrated to Canada, from China, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is a history professor at the University of British Columbia.

<sup>74</sup> Canada has been repeatedly rebuked by the United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for failing to curtail discriminatory practices, particularly against aboriginals who continue to be over-represented in prison and under-represented in the workforce, public office, and government, and for use of the term ‘visible minorities,’ which the committee found discriminatory and in contravention of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CBC News, 2007).

<sup>75</sup> “Today, immigration in Canada has a far-reaching impact on the country’s population growth. It was responsible for two-thirds of our population growth in the intercensal period of 2001 and 2006.” <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/immcit/index.cfm> [Accessed December 6, 2007]

*Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural*

*Differences* – mandated with seeking consensus, through public discourse, on reasonable accommodation for minority groups. There are also exemplars who are actively pursuing an inclusive environment; Virk refers to Microsoft and AT&T as corporate leaders in promoting practices of inclusion and diversity at all levels (as cited in Herar, 2007). BC Hydro actively seeks to support diversity by hiring a ‘diversity manager’ to assure the company’s workforce will reflect the same level of diversity as BC’s workforce by 2017. Already, it is well above average with 60% of senior management positions being held by women. BC Hydro’s president and CEO, Elton, counters suggestions that they may not be hiring the best candidate by emphasizing their interest in forming the ‘best team,’ not merely selecting the best individual (Anderson, 2009). While post-secondary institutions boast of diversity policies, open dialogue on diversity issues is rare amongst faculty members; I am still shocked and embarrassed to admit that some faculty members continue to comment, unchallenged, on the prevalence of racially-diverse faces of our students, in negative tones.

Modernity’s contribution to Canada’s diverse population derives from economic, social, and technological advancements that facilitate migration and promote tolerance for diverse beliefs. Increased mobility, the flattening of societal hierarchies, globalism, democratization, individualism, and communications and transportation technologies all have a part in breaking down geographic and social barriers. Paradoxically, these factors, while broadening one’s horizons, also contribute to a thinner, more trivial existence of

pervasive angst, the ‘something missing’ to which most can relate. Taylor (1989, 1991, 1992) describes this malaise as a disconnect from the higher schemes of nature and society, the unease people suffer as they move, not only from place to place, but from their heritage, culture, beliefs, and values. As previously upheld ‘moral imperatives’ fall out of favour, for many, life’s experiences become ‘flatter’ or ‘narrower’ (Ibid). The very diversity driven by modernity, paradoxically, may limit connections and jeopardize the quality of our experiences. This ‘narrowing’ of connections or ideologies has practical implications for post-secondary institutions, possibly reflected in “preferential hiring by ideology and group identity rather than academic accreditation” (Kay, 2007, p. A18). As ideology informs behaviour, narrow ideologies generally mark poor outcomes informed by limited resolve – the antithesis of mindfulness.

*the glass ceiling – a systemic ‘ism’ ...*

The preferential treatment of certain candidates, colleagues, staff, students, subordinates, and superiors, or conversely disregarding them on the basis of some implied, idiosyncratic standard is not uncommon in academe despite formal diversity policies<sup>76</sup>. Lloyd Wong (2007) reports that in the field of

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<sup>76</sup> Excerpts from Malaspina University College’s current diversity directive:

“SignPost 2006-09 – Human Rights Office Strategic Plan

Submitted by Maria Gomes, Human Rights Advisor

1a) Basic Services Offered:

The Human Rights Office at Malaspina University-College is responsible for implementing the Human Rights and Personal Harassment Policies and Procedures. The primary roles of the Human Rights Advisor are to:

- provide education on human rights, harassment, and diversity; and
- advise employees and students on options they have for responding to issues; and
- address complaints filed with the office.

2) Goals For The Coming Three Years

a) Education:

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i. Increased offering of diversity and equity training

In order to meet our goal of preventing discrimination employees and students not only need to know the law (which is accomplished through the Human Rights Workshop Series) but also provided with the personal tools that prevent discrimination – increased awareness and comfort with human diversity, awareness of the many stereotypes common in our culture, and ways of recognizing when stereotypes and other forms of pre-judgment are impacting how we interact and assess others.

In addition to general education regarding diversity and equity, there is also a need for education focused on the experience, context and culture of identifiable groups that form a significant component of our student population, specifically students of Aboriginal ancestry and students with disabilities.

ii. Offering education that supports inclusive learning environments

In order to support teaching that is responsive to our diverse student population professional development workshops for faculty on the “Inclusive Classroom”, in collaboration with the Teaching and Learning Centre, are needed.

iii. Offering of Conflict Resolution training

Offering training for supervisors and other employees on addressing workplace conflict, in collaboration with the Human Resources office, can result in reduced employee stress, more productive workgroups and reduced perceptions of harassment in the workplace.

iv. Increasing on-line learning opportunities

Expanding the educational material available on-line will expand employee access to educational material without needing to attend an in-person workshop.

b) Service:

i. Enhanced regional campus service

Improvements to service through the provision of regular in-person service to regional campuses are needed to ensure student and employee access to the services of the office. A more regular presence of the Advisor on the regional campuses, especially the Cowichan Campus, is needed. This would allow the Advisor to organize educational events tailored to the needs of the campus.

c) Facilities:

i. A private waiting area

Employees who consult the office often desire confidentiality. The current waiting area in the Office of the Vice-President of Student Services is often frequented by faculty employees and this can cause embarrassment to employees waiting to meet with the Advisor.

4) Greatest Need/Priorities For Change At Malaspina Overall

a) Improved Campus Physical Accessibility:

Our location on a hill side presents us with many challenges in making our facilities truly accessible to students and employees with disabilities. It is important for us to ensure with new construction, especially, that we develop facilities that are truly accessible to people with a wide spectrum of disabilities. Experience has shown that building to code offers a bare minimum of accessibility and that we need to take additional measures.

It is recommended that an accessibility specialist be involved in the design stage of any new building/significant renovation to ensure that unnecessary problems or barriers are not unintentionally created.

b) Space For Student Prayer/Meditation:

While many would support the need for a quiet, contemplative student space for students who wish to have a spiritual break in their day, there is one group of students where daily prayer is a requirement of their religion. Our increasing number of Muslim students are required to pray five times per day and usually two to three of those times fall during school hours. These prayers need to be integrated into their school day as going off campus to a formal prayer space (such as the Islamic Centre) would not be feasible. The best option would be an on-campus space.

c) Employment Equity Initiatives:

Providing a learning and working environment that is equitable for all goes beyond prohibiting discrimination. It also involves ensuring that our employees reflect the diversity in our community and in our student population whenever possible. An increased institutional focus on implementing



professional engineering, 21.5% of engineers of Chinese origin report workplace discrimination or bumping up against the glass ceiling. This is consistent with Statistics Canada data showing that 20% of people of visible minority have, within the last five years, experienced discriminatory treatment (Pablo, 2007). Wong describes this systemic discrimination as cultural racism, referring to the “artificial barriers based on attitudinal and organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions” (Ibid, p. 13), as the glass ceiling<sup>77</sup>.

The colloquialism ‘glass ceiling’ aptly describes the invisibility of contrived impediments to opportunities arising from, and sustained by virtue of, the failure of many to recognize its very existence. Obstacles are thus more insidious by their concealment. The Association of Chinese Canadian Professionals (ACCP) (Wong, as cited in Pablo, 2007) refers to the glass ceiling in describing conditions under which individuals outside the dominant group bump up against an impenetrable, invisible barrier firmly positioned in the way of their career path, effectively impeding their ascent. Edmond Wong (Ibid) speaks to this phenomenon and its inherent injustices, referring to the under-

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our Employment Equity Policy is needed if we are to provide role models and mentors for our many students of Aboriginal ancestry, students with disabilities and visible minority students.

5) Significant Shared Values

- Supporting student success
- Providing a welcoming and safe learning and working environment
- Promoting an environment where students and staff, with all of our diversity, are accepted and included
- Collaboration and cooperation with each other as members of the same community with, at least, some shared goals
- Ensuring our programs and services are of high quality and meet or exceed appropriate standards”  
<http://www.mala.ca/EducationalPlanning/SignPosts/PlansSERVICEDEPTsandOTHER/Human%20Rights2005.pdf#search='diversity'> [Accessed December 10, 2007]

<sup>77</sup> Citing the U.S. Department of Labor’s definition of the *glass ceiling* (Pablo, 2007, p. 13).

representation of minorities at senior management levels in Canadian organizations. He counters the argument that language or cultural barriers are a legitimate rationale for impediments to career progression with the observation that many such professionals are Canadian born, raised, and educated. Wong (Ibid) voices his concern over Canadians' complacency:

[U]nlike the U.S., Canada has done little to recognize, much less study, the 'glass ceiling' issue ... this barrier that prevents visible minorities from going further up the corporate ladder. Wong said the matter could be illustrated through the experiences of women in general. He noted that although they comprise 50% of the workforce, women represent only 30% of middle management, and at the top level only three %. 'The higher you go, the more of a barrier there is,' he said. 'It's the same thing with minorities, except the situation is even worse (Pablo, 2007, p. 13).

The glass ceiling, being simultaneously rigid and indiscernible, impedes occupational advancement, forming an effective mechanism for maintaining the reigning hegemony, whether gender, race, or ideologically based. If this is not the case, why does the face of Parliament, juries, police forces, and faculty not mirror the degree of diversity visible in the faces of our students? Reductive reasoning suggests the time lag associated with accelerated rates of

immigration<sup>78</sup>, yet it is apparent that hiring practices in many organizations fail to authentically evaluate individuals' qualifications without reference to distinguishing physical characteristics or heritage. Sadly, I can attest to exclusionary practices precluding the eligibility of eminently qualified faculty candidates. This deplorable phenomenon may be partially attributable to the flat organizational structure of university colleges, which requires faculty to take on administrative roles for which they are under-qualified. Faculty preside over essential administrative functions, formally under the purview of management, administrative, or clerical staff. The hiring of new faculty – pre-screening, interviewing, and engaging candidates – generally rests with faculty peers with little management involvement. With little accountability, direction, or training in human resources, the personal ideologies of individual members of the hiring committee may significantly contribute to less-than-ideal outcomes.

Educational leaders are answerable for the quality of egalitarianism practiced under their watch – the quality of acceptance and integration, vis-à-vis tolerance – which ultimately contributes to, and extends, acceptance within the organization and beyond. As an alternative to formal diversity policies, Kay

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<sup>78</sup> Canada's 2006 census results indicate a "total population" 31, 241,030, of which 6,186,95 (sic) are "immigrant population". BC's total population of 4,074,385, includes an immigrant population of 1,119,215. The immigrate rate was significantly higher in the years 2001 to 2006, during which 1,110,000 people immigrated to Canada, representing "17.9% of the total foreign-born population". "Proportion of foreign-born highest in 75 years", accounting for 19.8% of the total population. 20.1% of the general population is allophone (mother language is neither French nor English). "The Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver census metropolitan areas (CMAs) were home to 68.9% of the recent immigrants in 2006. In contrast, slightly more than one-quarter (27.1%) of Canada's total population lived in these three CMAs." "In the Vancouver CMA, nearly three-quarters (74.7%) of recent immigrants lived in just four municipalities: the cities of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby and Surrey." Kwantlen University College has campuses in Richmond and Surrey (Statistics Canada, 2007) <http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/071204/d071204a.htm> [Accessed December 6, 2007]

(2007) argues for an honest appraisal and open dialogue of the realities of diversity politics in post-secondary institutions, as, “[i]n all that touches race, ethnicity and gender, diversity is sacrosanct on Canadian campuses. Diversity of opinion, though, has for a generation been virtually proscribed in the academic community” (Kay, 2007, p. A18). Perhaps Kay’s “velvet totalitarianism” (Ibid) of institutionalized diversity ideologies and integration policies stems from aspirations of tolerance; but, should educational institutions not aspire to the higher ideal of acceptance? Acceptance derives organically from respect and recognition; tolerance denotes forbearance oft imposed by regulation or policy. I continue to observe a culture of tolerance, rather than acceptance, in post-secondary institutions – environments in which concerns are whispered surreptitiously. There appears to be little appetite for deep, introspective discourse concerning such complex issues in results-orientated peer administered academic departments. If our institutions truly value the pursuit of truth and reality, a question I would pose to leadership is: how then – where, when, and under what conditions – are we to interrogate and deliberate these notions? It is my hope that this project contributes to such a discussion. To do so, we must incorporate all voices, including women’s; sadly, it is been my experience that this is not the case. Again, I look to the Canadian experience to illustrate experiential examples common to many women in post-secondary institutions.

*the presumption of gender parity...*

Women have indeed made headway in the workplace, from the recognition of women as ‘persons’ in 1929<sup>79</sup>, to equal pay for equal work, anti-harassment and equity policies, and the benefits of union representation. Yet, in Canada, gender parity has not yet been achieved; Graydon<sup>80</sup> (2007) refers to economic inequity in the workplace, the tolerance of violence against women, and the failure of women to realize “the picture of Canadian power to more like us, in all our diversity...” (Graydon, A17). In BC, the “exodus of powerful women...from Premier Campbell’s male-dominated government” has been noteworthy (Cernetig, 2007, p. A4). In December 2007 alone, Labour Minister Illich and Finance Minister Taylor, resigned. Recent resignations include Minister Clark (Children and Families), and three deputy ministers; Ballem (Health), Greene (Intergovernmental Affairs), and Vrooman (Finance). Some have told of being “overly micromanaged or frozen out of key government decisions” (Ibid). I suspect many women are subjected to similar treatment; certainly post-secondary institutions are not immune to this ‘ism.’

In 2008, then House of Commons’ Leader of the Opposition and Liberal Party leader Stéphane Dion called on the Liberal Party to ensure that 33% of candidates are women<sup>81</sup>, emphasizing the importance of women’s participation

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<sup>79</sup> Canadian women were judicially declared ‘persons’ on October 18, 1929 under the British North America Act. This decision actually originated with the Privy Council in England, which overturned a Supreme Court of Canada judgement deciding that women were not persons.

<sup>80</sup> Winner of the Persons Case award (Graydon, 2007, p. A17).

<sup>81</sup> On September 28, 2008, CBC News, reported by Cecilia Walters on CBC Radio One, reported that women represent 34% of Liberal candidates.

in federal politics. Not without controversy, the BC New Democratic Party (NDP) has similarly implemented a quota system.<sup>82</sup> While target setting is considered laudable in some circles, “[m]any of the Liberals’ women candidates are either incumbents or nominees...where they have little chance of capturing a seat” (Patrick & Gagnon, 2007, p. A1). Franceschet (as cited in Patrick & Gagnon, 2007) notes that these goals are often reached by running women in ridings that are not winnable. Such strategies serve merely as a contrivance – presenting the notion of equal opportunity without actually leading to electoral representation in Parliament.

In April 2007, 21% of House of Commons’ members (Members of Parliament) were women, which is significantly disproportionate to the general population. With hints of a possible federal election, 42% of NDP; 35% of Liberal; and 14% of Conservative candidates were women (Patrick & Gagnon, 2007). This is inexplicable when compared to other countries; even strife-ridden Rwanda boasts a female dominated government (Agence France-Presse, 2007, p. A11). Finland, in the same month, became the first country governed by a female dominated cabinet; of twenty ministers, 12 women (60%), headed by a male Prime Minister (Ibid). However, “while women will dominate numerically they will not head up the most prestigious or influential portfolios, such as finance” (Ibid). It is possible that the prestige positions bestowed upon male cabinet

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<sup>82</sup> In November, 2007, the BC NDP party formally adopted a nomination rule requiring that, in ridings currently unrepresented, women must represent 30% of candidates. Under the same rules, 10% must be of visible minority, disabled, native, gay or trans-gendered. (Melnichuk, 2007, p. 4)

members reflects a manifestation of Rhode's<sup>83</sup> "presumption of competence" (Rhode, 2003, p. 20), whereby men are accorded a presumption of competence not bestowed upon their equally qualified female counterparts (Rhode, 2003). In 2009, Canada's ranking in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index of 144 countries' assessment of women's participation in politics rose from 31<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> as a result of an increase to 22% representation in parliament (O'Neil, 2009). Index co-author Zahidi (as cited in O'Neil, 2009) advises Canada to "make the investments necessary to ensure women rise to a position of leadership in terms of economic and political decision-making" (O'Neil, p. B4), warning that failure to include women in power positions prevents Canada's from competing economically on the world stage (Ibid).

The difficulty women have of establishing credibility is complicated by the presumption of gender parity. Significant research points to difficulties women encounter in "establishing their capability and credibility"<sup>84</sup> (Rhode,

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<sup>83</sup> American Deborah Rhode, named, by the *National Law Journal*, "as one of the country's fifty most influential women lawyers." (Rhode, 2003, p. xvii), Professor of Law, Stanford Law School; director, *Keck Center on Legal Ethics*; vice-chair, *NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund*; chair, *American Bar Association's (ABA) Commission on Women in the Profession*; president, *Association of American Law Schools*; and director, *Institute for Research on Women and Gender*, Stanford, explores the experiences of women leaders in *The Difference "Difference" Makes: Women and Leadership* (Rhode, 2003). This publication comprises a compilation of papers, arising from the *Women's Leadership Summit*, the purpose of which was to deliberate issues surrounding women and leadership, particularly in addressing the 'differences' experienced by, and imposed upon, women leaders. Women leaders, from the world of academe, business, law, and politics, addressed questions of gender differences and leadership, including Canada's 19th Prime Minister, Kim Campbell.

<sup>84</sup> "See studies cited in Kay Deaux and Marianne La France, "Gender," in *The Handbook of Social Psychology* 788 (Daniel T. Gilbert et al., 4th ed., 1998); Erkut, *Inside Women's Power*, at 25-26; Rhode, *Speaking of Sex*, at 145; Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, *Good for Business*, at 26-28, 64-72, 93-96, 104-106; Valian, 'Cognitive Basis,' at 1046-1049; Cecilia J. Ridgeway and Shelly J. Correl, 'Limiting Inequality Through Interaction: The Ends(s) of Gender,' 29 *Contemp. Socio.* 110, 113 (2000); Diana L. Bridge, 'The Glass Ceiling and Sexual Stereotyping: Historical and Legal Perspectives of Women in the Workplace,' 4 *Va. J. of Soc. Pol'y & L.* 581, 604-606 (1997)." (Rhode, 2003, p. 38)

2003, p. 8). Due to advancements in women's' rights, women find themselves in an uncomfortable predicament—a collectively pervasive disinclination to seriously consider gender bias, coexisting with the phenomenon of the glass ceiling; the presumption being that women have achieved equality and recognition is meritorious, but "[s]uch views are hard to square with the facts" (Rhode, 2003, p. 6).<sup>85</sup> Women "remain underrepresented at the top and overrepresented at the bottom in both public and private sectors" (Ibid). This parallels Edmond Wong's assessment of under-represented minorities in senior management positions and the experiences of our indigenous peoples<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> Rhode, as editor has compiled the papers of delegates to the *Women's Leadership Summit*, including that of Kim Campbell, Canada's 19th, and first female, Prime Minister. Rhode's introduction is informative, interesting, and compelling. The introduction alone, has 16 pages (200) of reputable references. As the summit was co-sponsored by the American Bar Association, it focused primarily on leadership in the U.S. judiciary, politics, and business.

<sup>86</sup> In 2008, Ontario's Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) and Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto filed court action against the Ontario government and called for a public enquiry into the systematic denial of First Nations' rights of accused to be tried by a jury of their peers in the courts. There is specific evidence of First Nation reserve residents' omission from jury selection lists in the years 2000 to 2006 (Beaton, 2008) in the Judicial District of Kenora, where 41% of the population is aboriginal, but it appears that similar systemic failures remain unrecognized elsewhere in Canada (Tremonti, 2008). For instance, concurrently, the BC Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) filed a BC Supreme Court challenge to new federal rules excluding Indian status cards as valid identification for the purpose of casting a ballot in federal elections. The April 2009 hearing, well past the 2008 federal election, "could stop up to 700,000 voters across Canada from voting" (Baker, 2008, B9). Concurrently, the Certificate of Indian Status, was listed as an authorized credential on Elections Canada's ubiquitous public notices; a telephone call to Elections Canada did not clarify whether or not a status card was indeed valid identification, but clarified the requirement of a valid document; it must contain name, address, photograph, and signature. Whereas drivers licences contain these, according to Jim Quail, of PIAC, "there are no federal documents that qualify" (Baker, G., 2008). The advice given is to use original documents, such as insurance or utility bills confirming one's address, yet reserve and many rural residents do not have street addresses, by virtue of the nature of governance – there is no municipality to authorize it. NAN Deputy Grand Chief Fiddler, lawyer Falconer, and University of Toronto's Faculty of Law Roach, point out the fundamental lack of justice, fairness, and democracy, of a system that systematically obstructs access its citizens access to trial by a jury of peers. While native peoples are over-represented as both accused and victims, few appear on the lists of potential jurors in Canada (Ontario's Attorney General, Chris Bentley adamantly defended the justice system by indicating questionnaires on residency—required for inclusion of prospective jurors—were mailed out and some leaders contacted, however those 1/10 First Nations not responding (1/2 response rate in the non-native population) were excluded from the list of prospective jurors. The Attorney General's insistence on the completion and return of questionnaires disregards accepted cultural, sociological, and geographic barriers, experienced by visible minorities (Tremonti, A., 2008).



Canada is well recognized as an egalitarian and tolerant nation; as Canadians we cherish this reputation. Yet the reality of women's experience suggests that Canadians are unduly complacent and perhaps unaware of Canada's official declaration against gender discrimination as a signatory of the United Nations' international accord, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Status of Women, Canada, November 23, 2007). Canada's official position is difficult to reconcile with the under-representation of women in senior or executive roles in institutions and politics. Copps (2004) commented on how little had changed since 1984, her first year in Parliament: "In 2004 the double standard applied to men and women is alive and well in politics and journalism" (Copps, 2004, p. 12). In 2007, Copps reiterated this sentiment in response to the cavalier and disrespectful treatment

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The report, known as the Marshall Report, arising from the Royal Commission of Inquiry on the Donald Marshall Jr. Prosecution, was released on January 26, 1990. This report, into the wrongful murder conviction of Donald Marshall, a Mi'kmaq, was highly critical of the political interference and racism in Nova Scotia's judicial system and in society generally. Nova Scotia Archives & Records Management. (1989). Timeline History of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court (NSARM call no: KEN 7970 N935 R888 1989). Nova Scotia: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/mikmaq/cls19.asp>, <http://www.courts.ns.ca/history/timeline.htm> [Accessed September 23, 2008]), , this, despite the 1990 Marshall Report , which revealed that no Canadian jury had, hitherto, included aboriginal members and gave evidence of systemic racism in the judicial system and society at large (Tremonti, 2008; Brown, 2008; Beaton, 2008). According to Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn Atleo, Canada, one of only four countries to vote against the 2007 UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (which passed 143-4) has thus far not signed the declaration, in contravention of protocol (Pemberton, 2010). The discourse of the day regarding trial by a jury of one's peers is entrenched in human rights; long forgotten is modernity's march towards British common law—the foundation of Canadian jurisprudence—and the creation of the jury system in the twelfth century. "Even today, juries are virtually the sole institutions that 'regularly call upon ordinary citizens to engage each other in a face-to-face debate'" (as cited in Goodin, 2000). The right of an accused to trial by a jury of peers is embedded in modernity's movement towards self-rule, freedom from persecution, and individual rights; away from the injustices previously imposed upon citizens by virtue of hierarchical social order. Falconer and Roach (interview with Tremonti, 2008) frame this in terms of the integrity of the justice system and the fundamental confidence in its fairness, opining that Canada's justice system disappoints many disadvantaged groups. The Kenora situation suggests prejudicial, undemocratic systems persevere in a culture self-identified as democratic, inclusive, and egalitarian.

of Member of Parliament (MP) Belinda Stronach in the House and media. The front page of the National Post, as an example, reported Stronach's 2007 resignation in the same vein: "Let's be clear, her chief assets were, in order, her money, her gender, her clothes and her looks" (Coyne, 2007, p. A1) rather than commenting on her leadership competencies. Such inappropriate commentary further contributes to the plethora of reasons women have to be fearful of 'success'.

*recognition given or withheld...*

Women's leadership qualities, which often differ from traditional command and control, task-oriented, competitive management styles, are often questioned, even in light of research supporting their efficacy. Women's management styles tend towards more flexibility, communication, contemplation, and participation (Chandler, 2007), much needed in flat organizations. This newly constructed conventional wisdom remains inconsistent with women's perceived leadership competencies, reflected in the under-representation of women in formal leadership positions (Rhode, 2003). Ironically, women fail to be recognized for the very leadership qualities that are effective in creating collaborative cultures so much in demand today, due in part to the flattening phenomenon (Ibid). Campbell opines that qualified and talented women are excluded from "access to power" (Campbell, 2003, p. 125) because of gendered organizations' predilection for normalizing and privileging culturally ascribed male traits, and devaluing those normally associated with women. Women

continue to be under-represented in senior positions in post-secondary institutions despite institutional and legislative equity policies (Chandler, 2007).

Women, aspiring to leadership roles, are subjected to many acculturated contradictions. For instance, “great man” (Rhode, 2003, p. 8) leadership theories extol the leadership virtues associated with power, assertiveness, and forcefulness, yet women who adopt assertive management styles are labelled as abrasive, inflexible, or uncooperative. A ‘double-bind’ occurs when women fail to adopt a strong assertive attitude, but then find themselves “losing ground to men who are more assertive” (Ibid)<sup>87</sup>. Women “risk appearing too ‘soft’ or too ‘strident,’ too aggressive or not aggressive enough” (Ibid) irrespective of their actual leadership abilities. According to Rhode, women professionals generally feel they are held to a higher standard than men, to which I can personally attest. In education generally, female participation is high at faculty and support staff levels, while men predominate in senior positions:

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<sup>87</sup> This is particularly true for women in traditionally male-dominated positions, or if assessed by men. “Rochelle Sharpe, ‘New Studies Find that Female Managers Outshine Their Male Counterparts in Almost Every Measure,’ *Businessweek Online*, Nov. 20, 2000, [www.businessweek.com].” (Rhode, 2003, p. 37).

The problem of under representation of women in senior ranks of academia persists. The literature posits that at the heart of the issue are masculinist-gendered organizations that remain covertly inhospitable to women, families, and flexible career paths. After 40 years of examination and activism, academic women have not managed to shift the balance of power (Chandler, 2007, p. iii).<sup>88</sup>

Such 'inhospitability' is reflected in women consistently receiving lower ratings for competence, while concurrently being held to higher standards than men. Compounding this inequity is the tendency to discount women's accomplishments, which are neither recognized nor rewarded as highly of those of men. When recognition is bestowed upon women, their success is often devalued by ascribing it to preferential treatment or mere luck. This phenomenon is dramatically demonstrated by the 'disappearance' of female world leaders from the world stage upon retirement, observed by former world leader Campbell, "when you're a woman, your accomplishments don't stick to you. Women are not seen as leaders; their success is really seen as kind of a fluke" (Campbell as cited in Pachner, 2007, p. 120).

Misrecognition and non-recognition represent more than just a fundamental lack of respect; real harm is inflicted by this type of rankism. "Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need"

(Taylor, 1992, p. 26) and in Canada's democratic pluralistic society, a

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<sup>88</sup> The term *masculinist-gendered*, is explained by Chandler: "The authors returned to the idea that in masculine gendered organizations masculine practices are held as the norm, in the sense that they are seen to be ordinary, normal and taken for granted. The responses from senior management revealed a valuing of characteristics that typify what Currie et al. describe as *peak male* culture, demonstrated by a working style that emphasized 'performance, competition, conformity to the corporate mission and delivering outputs' (2002, p. 175)." (Chandler, 2007, pp. 32-33)

fundamental right. The socially-ascribed nature of identity development serves to reinforce both positive and negative self-imagery. Misrecognition or non-recognition results in a “false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor, 1999, p. 25), loss of voice and self-deprecation, further contributing to a hegemonic sense of entitlement by its perpetrators. The impact of ‘mis’ or ‘non’ recognition is self-perpetuating as women “internalize these stereotypes” (Rhode, 2003, p. 9) and are “ground down by their experience of 'success'” (Campbell, 2003, p. 125). Internalizing negative images results in a sense of not deserving similar deference, recognition, or rewards received by men. Withholding recognition diminishes women’s roles and portrays them as less capable than male colleagues, further exacerbating the lack of confidence and grooming that inhibits healthy risk-taking and performance. With lost self-assurance or humiliation, the cycle perpetuates and, in turn, can significantly impede performance, further eroding opportunities (Rhode, 2003).

While companies with women directors consistently outperform others, in 2009 only 13% of board members of Canada’s FP 500 companies<sup>89</sup> were women (Morton, 2009, D4), albeit a significant increase from the 8.2% of *Fortune 500* company board members in 1997<sup>90</sup>. Macfarlane, of Ernst & Young LLP (Canada),

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<sup>89</sup> Per Josephine Nadel, a Boden Ladner Gervais LLP partner; referring to the Women on Board Forum: Transforming Corporate Culture conference, Vancouver, 2009, speakers include senior executives from BC Hydro, Boden Ladner Gervais, LLP, Weyerhaeuser Company Ltd., University of BC, TransCanada Corporation, O’Callaghan & Associates, Women-omics, Women on Board Mentoring Program, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Sauder School of Business.

<sup>90</sup> According to Catalyst Canada, in 1997 8.2% of *Fortune 500* company board members were women, increasing to 12.5% in 2006; according to France Simard, the Conference Board of Canada indicates the number of female corporate board members overall is closer to 9% (Deveau, 2007, p. WK1).

opines that this low number derives from the under-representation of women at senior management levels, of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO), from which board members are traditionally drawn (Macfarlane as cited in Deveau, 2007, p. WK1). Because of the lucrative and prestigious nature of many corporate boards, there is considerable inertia and little turnover in board membership; this, combined with a propensity of members to invite like individuals, contributes to a lack of diversity according to Costuros, a board member of BC Hydro (Ibid, p. WK4). Macfarlane's (Ibid) observations that corporations and their governing boards are strengthened by diversifying, as are systems generally, are echoed by Zahidi (as cited in O'Neil, 2009) and Nadel (as cited in Morton, 2009). Because under-represented individuals are particularly sensitive to risk, they bring additional qualities of awareness and creativity, along with their expertise and collaborative style (Macfarlane, as cited in Deveau, 2007; Zahidi, as cited in O'Neil, 2009; and Nadel, as cited in Morton, 2009). Governing boards of directors are, therefore, not achieving their full potential by excluding diverse contributions to their deliberations.

Further, with the media and management focusing on corporate returns, attention is drawn away from their individual board members' fiduciary responsibilities. The attitudes of take-charge executives or boards, who take rights beyond those legally bestowed upon them, have been dramatically thrown onto public stage, with corporate scandals and far-reaching economic crises caused by directors who, rather than demonstrating stewardship, fail their fiduciary duties to their constituents – who elect directors to oversee their

interests. One need only look at governing boards of major Canadian institutions to appreciate that their faces do not reflect Canada's diverse population; they are not 'veiled' from self-serving decision-making. Such expression of exclusion – the pervasive rankism and shallow individualism reflected in the 'freezing-out' described by women politicians, along with masculinist-gendered cultures, and covert animosity to women – are, in my experience, very real. Women indeed may chafe against them and successfully achieve career goals; but their exclusion from information, decision-making, or training makes that difficult or impossible, and is reflected in low participation rates in senior management.

According to the Senior Women Academic Administrators of Canada (SWAAC), women occupy approximately 30% of administrative positions – comprised of departmental chair and higher – in Canadian colleges and universities<sup>91</sup> (Chandler, 2007), disproportionate to the 59% student participation rate of women<sup>92</sup>:

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<sup>91</sup> “In 1999, women faculty in Canadian universities constituted 26% of full-time faculty. Of those, 14% were full professors, 31% were associate professors, and 42% assistant professors (Stanley, Robbins & Morgan, 2002). In 2001, the proportion of full-time women faculty had increased to 29%, with 42% in non-tenured positions, 39% on the tenured track, and 22 % tenured (Stanley, Robbins, & Morgan, 2003). Results from a 2004 survey funded by the Senior Women Academic Administrators of Canada (SWAAC) supported these results and found that women still constitute a minority of those holding senior administrative positions at Canadian universities and colleges: women hold approximately 30% of the positions. This figure has not changed since 2000, when the last SWAAC survey was completed (Grant, 2005).” (Chandler, 2007, p. OVERVIEW 4)

<sup>92</sup> “Consistent with earlier surveys, the overall participation rate in 1997 was quite similar for men (27%) and women (29%). However, women received less employer support for their education and consequently had to rely more on self-financing than men.”

Catalogue no. 81-586-XIE, *A Report on Adult Education and Training in Canada Learning a Living*  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/81-586-XIE/81-586-XIE1998001.pdf>

The covert nature of gendered organizations is described as ‘embedded male patterns of behaviour in academia that operate beneath the façade of policies and rules put into place to counter inequity’ (Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan 2005, p. 431). It is precisely because of this gap between policy and practice, between what the organization says and does, that makes the impact of gendered organizations difficult to measure, and difficult to address (Chandler, 2007, p. 26).

Reflecting their cynicism, many women, worn-down, simply choose to leave (Cluff, 2008). Some professions, suffering from inadequate numbers to effectively provide services to their clients, are coming to grips with this phenomenon and are implementing strategies designed to attract and retain women. BC’s Law Society, decrying the loss of women lawyers disproportionate to their graduating numbers, is recommending best practices to eliminate systemic biases and increase fairness<sup>93</sup>, in addressing women’s concerns (Hall, 2009). It is hoped the cachet of the Law Society’s recognition of the glass ceiling will pervade institutional thinking; it remains to be seen when, or whether, we will see the face of senior leadership reflect the face of Canadian pluralism.

*challenging the status quo...*

Human rights, autonomy and self-rule, in concert with communication technologies, are strongly reflected in modernity’s individualism and secularism,

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<sup>93</sup> The report, *The Business Case for Retaining and Advancing Women in Private Practice in BC*, recommends ten ‘best practices,’ including “raising awareness and correcting unintentional and hidden biases, using bias-free evaluations, ensuring fair access to assignments” (Hall, 2009).



having brought us where we are today – atomistic, democratic, individualistic; practising life’s mission in a secular environment of globalism, free speech, and flattened hierarchies. Yet, I observe a culture of centralized influence rife with political apathy, rankism, and misinformation, all the while awash in communications technologies, globalism, human rights legislation, democratic governance, and direct access to information.

University of Toronto’s Florida (2008) challenges aspects of Friedman’s *world is flat* model, emphasizing that energy and creativity derive from diverse individuals communing with one another, not virtually but in real communities (Florida, 2008). Similarly, Brook (2008), director of the Ayn Rand Institute, challenges conventional belief in the inexorable power of globalism’s progression towards predictable economic and social outcomes. University of Toronto’s Massey College Senior Fellow, Mark Kingwell, cautions against over confidence in the positive nature of change; change, whether social or technological may portend “a new and worse version” (Gladwell & Kingwell, 2008). Change emanates out of actions and policies that originate with thoughts and ideas, not of preordained flat world forces (Brook, 2008) and a good deal of ‘change’ is within our sphere of influence. Leaders should be mindful not only of modernity’s externalities, but also of institutional internalized world-views driving decisions, action, and behaviour. It is extraordinary that some still hold to outmoded exclusionary practices that narrow horizons rather than capitalizing on opportunities to expand them, particularly in light of the evidence that broad worldviews contribute to innovation, creativity, and the ‘bottom-line’. If

rankism is tolerated, if deliberation is stifled, if egalitarianism is espoused but not embraced, inequity invariably will dominate, to the detriment of the community and organizational ingenuity. As the flat peer administered academic department paradigm inherently necessitates cooperation, collaboration, and innovation, it can ill afford to imperil these qualities by disregarding the effects of rankism.

*conclusion...*

In some regards, I feel as if I have thrown down the proverbial gauntlet, in telling 'truth to power,' and why this should be so is evident in its expression. By exploring difficult race and gender issues, and engaging in a sharing and clarifying dialectic, as is my intent, our leaders, colleagues, and institutions can aspire to a richer form of authenticity. How leadership aspires to do so is explored in Chapter Five's examination of clear communications through clear leadership (Bushe, 2001, p. 1). I feel that clear leadership should be incorporated into distributed leadership models and, in Chapter Five, I explicate clear leadership skills, viewed through a *social and communal* (Henley, 2006) lens, that would be effectual in flat organizations that may indeed be 'too' flat.

## CHAPTER 5 FOCUSING ON CLARITY

An exploration of modernity's externalities reveals the shadow side of modernity, and its impact on organizations generally, and special purpose teaching universities in particular. Romantic idealization of Canadian egalitarianism, the divisive effects of radical individualism, conflicting influences from a hyper-technical environment, and the impositions of provincial legislation and funding based on an intractably flat organizational structure all conspire to overwhelm a system highly dependent on the goodwill of its membership. Personal relationships, which are inherently difficult, are further complicated by modernity's externalities, yet are vitally important in preserving goodwill, strengthening systems, and enabling the inclusive deliberation that is central to collaboration and innovation, and essential to empowerment. Given these complexities, I endeavour to clarify their effects and suggest a leadership strategy in response. In this chapter, I explore clear leadership (Bushe, 2001) and expand upon it, as an alternative to the existing reactive, macro-managing paradigm. The essence of clear leadership is clear communication; by employing clear communication strategies the quality of personal relationships can be improved and thereby set the stage for empowerment and deliberation, out of which collaboration and innovation emerge.

*the need for flexibility and initiative...*

In transformational times, the heightened awareness and adaptability of an organization's innovators enable it to not only to survive, but to thrive (Kouba, 2007). Unfortunately, the once efficient command and control management style of traditional bureaucracy no longer affords the speed and flexibility necessitated by modernity's transformations. Thus, most will need to consider reorganizing or revisit their notions of empowerment and leadership. Many will find it necessary to revise their leadership practices in response to competitive pressures in an era of radical individualism and empowerment (Bushe, 2001; Taylor, 2004). Mintzberg (as cited in Bushe, 2001) suggests that conflict is structurally incorporated into traditional management models with 'difficulties' managed via leaders' authority, thereby maintaining "a veneer of harmony" (Bushe, 2001, p. 9). In such organizations, bureaucratic layers and tight executive control frustrate individual initiative and imagination, fuelling collective resistance to change. Passable in a static environment, this model becomes stifling, and thus uncompetitive, in the face of rapid change. In comparison, organizations with flexible processes and a workforce that is encouraged to reach, seek alternatives, and take risks are able to manoeuvre and change quickly, which translates into the ingenuity required to further address not only technical difficulties but also the social implications of change and its inherent complexities (Homer-Dixon, 2000).

Vertical bureaucracies' low tolerance for change and resistance to innovation and self-reliance, whether in business, government, or education,

represent traditional hierarchical management and Fordist skills more suited to the industrial revolution than a modern technologically-driven knowledge economy. It has been noted by none other than Canada's 2009 Nobel science laureate, William Boyle, that those in power lack imagination (McLaren, 2009). It would seem fitting to extend his description of government and politicians to leadership more generally. The days of the managers imposing their will by sheer authority are long gone (Bibby, 2007; Robbins & Langton, 2004) with modernity's evolution into an age of individualism, empowerment and egalitarianism situated in a 'flat' world of intense competition and rapid social and technological change; a world in which people can "come together and undertake the process of inquiry, consultation, and deliberation" (Bai, 2001, pp. 309-310) in the pursuit of common goals. Many organizations recognize and incorporate such ideals into their organizational culture, while others have structurally flattened management merely in response to economic pressures.

Paradoxically, organizational flattening and empowerment, which is generally associated with less authority, by the nature of distributed responsibility and employee empowerment actually calls for 'more' authority (Bushe, 2001). Reducing hierarchy, in a distributed leadership model, compels more individuals (along with their individual talents) throughout the organization to be empowered with the authority necessary to obligate resources and direct change. While flattening the traditional management model reduces bureaucracy (less hierarchy), paradoxically, authority is increased as it percolates amongst employees (more authority). In such environments, it is essential that

employees have the means, skills, and access to resources as required, and that their authority is respected in order that they are genuinely empowered to make the difficult decisions required of them.

*empowering the organization by empowering individuals...*

Bushe (2001) distinguishes empowered organizations, from the merely flat, as those that incorporate empowering processes by:

breaking down tall hierarchies, using teams, breaking down functional departments, reducing centralized control and allowing more local autonomy, de-bureaucratizing, getting rid of rules and making people interact and negotiate, focusing on results and not procedures (p. 43)

Many organizations do indeed reduce structural hierarchy and devolve responsibility down and around, but some fail to incorporate, into their cultural ethos, essential notions of connectedness and negotiation. Clear, authentic, unambiguous communication is essential to turning flat organizations into empowered ones, wherein authority is rooted in collaborative partnership rather than command and control bureaucracy. In empowered organizations, the dynamics of inclusiveness, mutual respect for others' abilities, and a sense of partnership rooted in strong relationships and mature systems allows stakeholders "to discuss failures and successes and learn from everyone's experiences" (Bushe, 2001, p. 10) rather than glossing over thorny issues or repressing conflict with authority or false optimism (Ehrenreich, 2009).

Under ideal conditions of partnership, collaboration, and personal initiative, the university college model should epitomize the empowered organization. Such organizations have widely 'distributed leadership' said to be 'fluid,' whereby leadership roles are variably conditional on individuals' abilities, and particularly their capacity to exercise leadership when appropriate in the situational context (Mintzberg, 2006). Individual employees are empowered to take initiatives and, notably, have the authority to make and implement binding decisions. This differs significantly from traditional management, whereby the will of a few in power direct the actions of many subordinates. While efficient in prior times, inflexible and plodding bureaucracies and their accompanying politics stifle the individual talents that are desperately needed in dynamic environments (Morgan, 1997). When authority is dispersed, creativity and risk-taking thrive in an attitude of experimentation, where innovation flourishes and individuals, previously habituated to novelty, are more likely to undertake diverse responsibilities with alacrity (Bushe, 2001). Thus systemic 'webs of interdependence' (Homer-Dixon, 2000) and organizational ingenuity strengthen, and further individuals' empowerment.

In order to authentically empower, leaders should aspire to maintaining a climate in which interpersonal clarity can flourish. An organization is not 'empowered' by merely adopting a flatter organizational chart and delegating responsibility; clarity and trust are crucial. Regardless of the authority behind structural change, individual and organizational behaviours will re-emerge in

the absence of interpersonal clarity (Bushe, 2001). The degree to which the ethos of empowerment is authentically embraced depends on the character of the organization as a learning organization<sup>94</sup>, and its leadership practices (Bushe, 2001; Senge, 1994). Many leaders recognize the benefits of innovative and productive workers, but often in the form of tangibles or metrics such as share price, profitability, student counts, or other efficiency measures rather than stewardship or empowerment. Many leaders look to reorganization to achieve measurable outcomes; however, futility reigns when reorganization is merely instrumental. Familiar behaviours will simply re-emerge if underlying interpersonal and practice dynamics are not addressed. Exploitative, rather than empowering, flattening measures, if adopted instrumentally, are rarely conducive to authentic sharing and clarity, and impede, rather than facilitate, the organizational learning necessary for change. Such instrumental rationality is demonstrated in Nortel Networking Corp's<sup>95</sup> frequent, but ineffectual, reorganizations, undertaken in efforts to improve ethics (according to press releases), profitability, and share prices (Heiskanen, 2007).

Even those with sincere intentions to empower staff should be mindful of the difficulties associated with attempting to restructure or shape organizational culture. Sudden changes in ideology, if not appropriately shared and directed,

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<sup>94</sup> The Conference Board of Canada report, *Learning and Developing Outlook 2007: Are We Learning Enough*, includes data on Canadian organizations as learning organizations. Canada's rating, with respect to money spent on training, fell from 12 to 21st position.

<sup>95</sup> In 2009, Canada's Nortel Networking Corp., once responsible for the majority of stock trades on the TSX, declared bankruptcy, after tens of thousands of previous job losses, many attributable to offshore outsourcing; billions of dollars in losses; several investigations by regulators; and, charges laid by the RCMP and SEC .



can lead to fear and uncertainty, chaos even, as employees struggle to make sense of false assumptions or suffer confusion. Some trepidation is inevitable; uncertainty is, however, compounded by complications resulting from skill and information lapses, inadequate resources, or the disinclination of management to intervene as problems or conflict arise, which, in my experience, are common. Understanding and collaboration are essential, and should be modelled and nurtured by leaders who communicate clearly in an atmosphere of trust. But, first, leaders must be mindful of the consequences in the absence of clarity and trust, and secondly, care enough about their community members to give them voice.

Many re-structuring efforts result in disempowerment – reducing hierarchal levels and downwardly relegating responsibilities to employees without adequately resourcing changes, empowering workers, or establishing the constructs of democratic deliberation in philosophy and practice. Individual empowerment evolves with the emergence of “common spaces” (Taylor, 2004, p. 85)<sup>96</sup> in the “public sphere” (Ibid, p. 83), wherein all can engage in the discourse of the day and access information that was previously the sole purview of the powerful or privileged. The discourse that naturally follows the dissemination of information allows many, who may not even have met, to form a “common mind” (Ibid) and therefore formulate common actions<sup>97</sup>. The globalization of

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<sup>96</sup> “We can speak of common space when people come together in a common act of focus for whatever purpose... Their focus is common, as against merely convergent” (Taylor, 2004, p. 85).

<sup>97</sup> “The public sphere is a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus be able to form a common mind about these” (Taylor, 2004, p. 83).

common spaces, allowing for Friedman's (2005) 'superempowering' of individuals, is made possible by communications technologies – email, Internet, intranet, text messaging, social network sites, and internal social software – which now permeate all aspects of modern work and personal life<sup>98</sup>. Prior to virtual networking, earlier communications and transportation advances contributed to the development of common spaces. Historically, isolated from each other geographically and with limited access to information, people were generally unaware of common issues and lacked the resources to engage in them. Technological advances have since furthered the sharing of common interests and empowered individuals through the dissemination of information and the devolution of power and its attendant trappings.

However, the emergence of common spaces to facilitate hierarchical flattening does not automatically guarantee collaborative or reflective practices and, in fact, may be devoid of interpersonal clarity and deliberation. Lowe<sup>99</sup> (as cited in Alison Taylor, 2001) questions the perception of democratic practices in “high performing work organizations” (Taylor, A., 2001, p. 179) that one might presume to be characterized by flattened hierarchies, adaptability to change, and concern for all stakeholders particularly their personnel (Ibid). However, this appears not to be so, “particularly in terms of valuing human resources by

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<sup>98</sup> Internal social software, such as IBM's *Lotus Connections* sophisticated networking software – designed as a virtual meeting room for individuals to meet and exchange ideas; on-line project management software, such as *Basecamp HQ*—intended to manage the logistics of multiple projects, multiple locations, and distributed team members (Bradbury, 2007); and ‘virtual private networks’ (*VPNs*) and ‘presence software’ – to manage ‘virtual workers’ (Ramu, 2007). External social utilities, such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter.

<sup>99</sup> From: Lowe. G. (2000). *The Quality of Work: A people centred agenda*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

empowering, developing, and rewarding employees” (Ibid, p.180). We generally accept that collaboration and deliberation, reflected in the professional orientation of autonomous employees, naturally evolves out of the knowledge economy. However, this is not the case:

[E]mpirical investigation of Canadian trends indicates ... that most work organizations (including ‘high performance’ ones) continue to operate on a principle of hierarchal control (Taylor, A., 2001, p. 177).

This results in the incongruity of organizations that have flattened yet continue with centralized decision-making, in effect assuming the weakest of both tall and flat organizational models.

In addition, another trend is emerging in the form of workforce casualization, whereby skilled, specialized or professional personnel are outsourced offshore or are forced to leave their positions to become contractors, often to be engaged by former employers. Richard Sennett (2007) theorizes that the effect of casualization not only reduces one’s sense of belonging and loyalty but also has a fragmenting effect on the narrative of one’s work. As a result, one’s professional experiences become less satisfying, which further impacts the greater society (Ibid). I suspect most Canadians have observed or been touched by the phenomenon; individuals, caught in ‘downsizing’ lose jobs only to be ‘rehired’ or branch off as consultants. This practice rattles individual and organizational soul as insiders become outsiders, superfluous to relationships, and camaraderie drifts towards guarded courtesy. Spirit is missing; rather than

strengthening webs of interconnections and systems, connections are broken. The effect, upon the organization, of contracting services has been profound and demoralizing. Not only is the fracturing effect of lost colleagues and entire departments a cause to mourn, but the efficiency of those 'left behind' can be severely impaired. Common grievances, in organizations that have chosen to 'contract out' services, revolve around questions of who is in charge, who to contact, how to change processes, where to report complaints, and the like with, ironically, perplexing levels of bureaucracy navigated to resolve even the most minor issues related to contracted services. The pervasiveness of such instrumentalism is telling in surveys intended to identify organizational priorities: executives failed to address or even mention personnel issues<sup>100</sup> (as cited in Alison Taylor, 2001). It would appear that egalitarianism 'writ large,' manifest in collaboration and empowerment, is presumed rather than real; the problem then rests not on process and procedure, but on the underlying nuances of those presumptions.

*clarifying presumptions...*

It is necessary that we interrogate our presumptions and perceptions as, being human, we draw our conclusions and base decisions upon them. Revealing one's truths, whether personal or professional, allows intersubjective truth to emerge and displaces our human predilection for flawed perception-generation (Bushe, 2001). When intersubjectivity prevails, respectful and clear

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<sup>100</sup> Alison Taylor, citing Lowe's surveys of CEO's nine pressing priorities: Lowe, G. (2000). *The Quality of Work: A people centred agenda*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

communications, in concert with the increased confidence in the relationship it brings about, furthers the capacity of members to deliberate difficult and complex issues. Horizons are thereby broadened and systems strengthened, contributing to the higher version of authenticity, as described by Charles Taylor (1991). Mindful deliberation, in a respectful environment in which fears are allayed, fosters creativity, innovation, and mindful action. Thus, communicating is democratizing in the truest sense as members are drawn into the discourse and deliberation.

Clear communications – in Bushe’s terms (Bushe 2001) – are clear, unambiguous, and accurate – far from the disengagement of Taylor’s (1991) shallow version of authenticity. Flat collaborative organizations require personnel who are “willing to tell the truth about their experience and learn from it” (Bushe, 2001, p. 5), with a willingness to “listen to other people’s truths” (Ibid, p. 2). This contributes to the creation and preservation of interpersonal clarity and sustains the dance of mutual adjustment. In the absence of interpersonal clarity, Bushe observes “endless repetition of the same destructive patterns” (Ibid, p. 5) of conflict, inefficiency, pedestrian decision-making, misinformation, and poor morale, commonplace in places rife with invalid presumptions, where individuals speculate on others’ narratives – their stories. On the other hand, authenticity flourishes in an environment rich with interpersonal clarity; this contributes to an environment conducive to clear leadership, which serves in turn to “create a climate where people are willing to express their own truths and listen to other people’s truth, where working together is based on accurate

understanding, not assumptions” (Bushe, 2001, p. 2). Without clear communication, individuals’ feelings, needs, and opinions go unheeded; oblivious to their personnel’s ‘thinking,’ leaders “cannot really lead them” (Bushe, 2001, p. 5). It – the praxis of interpersonal clarity – is not for the faint of heart, for it takes courage, daring even, particularly in uber-polite, ‘don’t rock the boat’ cultures in which relationships and connections are fragile, and shallow thinking – manifest in resistance to the contemplation or deliberation of complex ideas – prevails.

*truth to power...*

Those in authority should be mindful of their effect on subordinates who, being sensitive to the control leaders have over them and their livelihood, generally are not as candid in their presence as leaders may believe (Ehrenreich, 2009). Subordinates are watchful and anxious about the power those in positional authority have over them and are less likely to communicate clearly with managers (Bushe, 2001). Many leaders, failing to recognize this phenomenon, are isolated from the realities of their organization. The more pressured and insecure employees feel, the higher the likelihood that they will subject their managers to misinformation and ingratiating behaviour (Chatman, 2009). With communications cloaked in optimism rather than honesty, and ingratiation supplanting integrity, this – the ‘threat rigidity effect’ (Chatman, 2009) – represents the antithesis of interpersonal clarity. While people tend to respond favourably to good news, Chatman is nonetheless surprised at the

extent of blatant obsequiousness, flattery, and false optimism from subordinates to which leaders are subjected and susceptible<sup>101</sup>.

Beyond impairing decisions and risking organizations' viability, such unawareness has a particularly insidious effect on 'middle managers' – the liaison between senior leadership and the general workforce – who know the truth, but fear speaking 'truth to power.' In an environment in which loyalty and reward are associated with positive news, middle managers are torn between mindless leaders and unmotivated staff who are well aware of the 'undoable.' As a result, reports Kakabadse (2009), middle managers are burning out at a rate far higher than senior counterparts. Worse still, workplace bullying by middle managers is increasing. On the other hand, these same managers, evaluated on unrealistic expectations, increasingly with less pay and fewer perks and without the resources, input, or authority required to implement higher orders, feel victimized<sup>102</sup> (Kakabadse, 2009). Misinformation and false perceptions, as a consequence of failing to tell 'truth to power,' thus become systemically integrated into strategic decision-making, jeopardizing the well-being of the institution and its membership. It is essential that all, whether or not in positional authority, refrain from providing, and also expecting, overly-positive

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<sup>101</sup> Jenny Chatman's research (Haas School of Business, University of California) shows that leaders readily accept blatant obsequiousness of subordinates as genuine, appreciating ingratiating behaviour regardless of its degree of deceitfulness. Rather than rewarding honesty, managers rewarded those who flattered and falsely reported on how well the organization was doing, how well teams were functioning, team moral, and the manager's performance. Chatman refers to this as the 'threat rigidity effect' (Chatman, 2009).

<sup>102</sup> Professor Andrew Kakabadse's research (Cranfield School of Management) of 21 countries, 12,000 teams, and 2,500 boards of directors, reports that 2/3 of middle managers are afraid to 'tell the truth' to their superiors (Kakabadse, 2009).

commentary and the obsequious behaviour described by Chatman (2009), or the uber-politeness of Bushe's (2001) veneer of harmony, and learn to communicate directly and truthfully – clearly.

*the power of intersubjective truths...*

I suggest that the clear communications of clear leadership represents a promising paradigm for organizations challenged by modernity's pressures. Mutual adjustment's clear communication, required of collaborative workplaces, can be achieved by sharing one's lived here-and-now experiences through sharing subjective truths – telling one's 'story' (Bushe, 2001):

Everyone involved contributes to the creation, maintenance, and change of the reality or truths they face at work.... Building teams and organizations, however, is a lot about inter-subjective truth (p.11).

Interpersonal clarity, built upon shared experiences and subjective truths, forms the basis of all trusting relationships and is essential in groups and flat organizations that rely on the initiative and collaboration of its members (Bai, 2001; Bushe, 2001). A caveat: all must feel safe and free to speak frankly, without embarrassment or coercion (or threat thereof) in an environment in which it is acceptable and commonplace to do so.

As Bushe tells us “[s]ubjective truth is based totally on what is going on in each individual...what you think, feel, and want” (Bushe, 2001, p. 10).

Originating in individuals' emotions and opinions, they are not the concrete objective truths with which we, professionals-turned-educators, are generally



more comfortable. In sharing one's subjective truth, "[w]e become intersubjective beings when, through sharing ourselves, we are open to each other's subjectivity and allow its transfusion across our individual differences" (Bai, 2001, p. 311). Collective goodwill and mutual understanding arise out of shared subjectivity, or intersubjectivity, described by Bai as "the process of mutual sharing of thoughts, perceptions, values, and attitudes" (Ibid). Exploring each others' social imaginary serves to moderate preconceived assumptions<sup>103</sup>, upon which impoverished decisions rely.

Rather than being rooted in objective truths, organizations are informed by "inter-subjective truths – they exist the way they do because of the web of agreements among the people inside and outside them" (Bushe, 2001, p. 159). It is essential for leaders to recognize the normal "sense-making" (Ibid, p. 8) of the human condition – assigning meaning and consistency to one's perceptions, and also those of others. These are viewed from our perspective, our perception-generation – interpretations of emotions, observations, and sensations (Ibid); they are perpetual to, and perpetuated through, the lens of each individual's idiosyncratic social imaginary. Rarely shaped objectively, these innate

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<sup>103</sup> Bushe observes that assumptions made in the absence of information tend to be negative, analogous to Grossman and Milgrom's *disclosure principle*.

characteristics<sup>104</sup> are nonetheless compelling, influencing actions, behaviour and beliefs, and thus central to understanding and awareness requisite to meaningful collaboration (Bushe, 2001; Taylor, 2004).

Recognizing incidences of groundless assumptions, biases, and stereotyping is fundamental to understanding behaviour and organizational culture, but I suspect is profoundly underestimated. While the how and why of human perception lies beyond the scope of this research, the generative element of the term perception-generation is worthy of some attention. Herman and Polivy, of University of Toronto, and Vartanian of Cornell University, explain that stereotypes originate out of incomplete information, citing their study of stereotypical associations between uncorrelated characteristics<sup>105</sup> (Cowan, 2007). Consider the inexplicability of extending confidence to celebrities well beyond their competences – the media soliciting commentary from actors, for instance, on matters of global significance like climate change (Fuller, 2003). Inappropriate perception-generation, ranging from mild stereotyping to extreme

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<sup>104</sup> This phenomenon is explored in a study examining the *cognitive imperative* brain function - which assigns meaning and understanding in the brain - in relation to the power and persistence of myths, thus exploring a biological basis for the human need for order. Referring to researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, the authors write on parietal lobe activity experienced by meditating Buddhist monks and praying Franciscan nuns; and research *ontological yearning* “the need to understand the fundamental nature of our world rather than simply accepting it as it is,” from the University of Miami and National Institute for Healthcare Research (US) – ontological learning - the incessant thinking activity of the brain in an attempt to understand (vs. merely observing and accepting) and the resulting need for myths (stories) to explain the incomprehensible (Manhar, 2005).

<sup>105</sup> In their study, using for example ethical characteristics and meal choices, respondents perceived the eater of a less nutritious meal as an exam cheater – a correlation which defies rational explanation (Cowan, 2007): “A paper published in the May issue of *Appetite*, a scientific journal...” (Cowan, 2007, p. A1).

‘percepticide’<sup>106</sup> (Juan, 2007, p. B6), is generally accompanied by ‘empathy deficit’<sup>107</sup> (Ehrenreich, 2009), symptomatic of Taylor’s (1991) shallow version of the ethic of authenticity.

In flat, empowered organizations – where egalitarianism is presumed – the effect of unchecked percepticide is particularly nefarious in its potential to fuel rankism. Biases, for instance, originate in percepticide and, if unchecked, have the potential to spread quickly through communities. Leaders must be attuned to circulating ‘stories,’ not by ferreting out their source as is normally expected of management, but by creating cultures in which clear communications dominate and thereby over-ride the impetus for generating unsound perceptions, germane to such misperceptions. The key to safeguarding our perceptions from prejudices and unwarranted beliefs is asking how our perceptions are *manufactured*: did we grasp all available information, have we allowed ourselves to truly ‘experience’ the reality rather than a filtered or manufactured version? Or, contrarily, are we ‘jumping to conclusions’ to ‘make sense’? Moving from a socially constructed ‘should be,’ dictated by individual social imaginaries, to ‘what is’ captures the essence of mindfulness, but how is such clarity accomplished?

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<sup>106</sup> Perceptions may be sustained by psychological coping mechanisms, according to Dr. J. Carlos Kusnetzoff, who refers to extreme denial of unpleasant realities, in the face of irrefutable evidence, as “‘percepticide’ – the killing of one’s psychological ability to recognize, admit and then humanely respond to reality.”(Juan, 2007, p. B6). Dr. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco explains that percepticide derives from fear driving the desire for psychological internal security, in which people fail to appropriately assess their environment and even themselves (Juan, 2007).

<sup>107</sup> The term ‘empathy deficit,’ coined by Barbara Ehrenreich, describes the inappropriate response – often cruel and flippant –to others’ suffering or feelings, brought about by North American attitudes of ‘forced’ cheerfulness or optimism imposed, for instance, on cancer patients and employees who are penalized for drawing attention to matters considered ‘negative.’

Thus far, I have suggested many imperatives and now suggest a means of addressing them in the model of clear leadership, introduced by Bushe (2001), in which the ‘skills,’ rather than ‘qualities,’ of “self-awareness, descriptiveness, curiosity, and appreciation” (Bushe, 2001, p. 11) are central. States Bushe (Ibid): “these skills are useful to anyone, regardless of their position, who works in an organization based on principle of teamwork, personal initiative, and partnership” (Ibid). In my view, the Buddhist concept of mindfulness<sup>108</sup> is closely aligned with clear leadership’s processes of authentic communication and leadership, achieving goals rather than power, and empowering individuals rather than dictating their actions. Clear leadership promotes flexibility and healthy risk-taking (Bushe, 2001; Senge, 1994), diametrically opposed to comparatively banal hierarchical bureaucracies and their accompanying politics. Clear leadership rests on a foundation of interpersonal clarity – achieved in the authentic sharing of intersubjective truths (Bushe, 2001). Somerville (2006) makes a similar case for shared ethics, as does Bai (2001) in recognizing intersubjectivity as a precondition to democratic practice. Interpersonal clarity is essential in sustaining quality interpersonal relationships, but, according to Bushe (2001), it is rare and, as Renihan (1985) concluded, with respect to cooperative behaviour, it has to be learned. Our predilection for avoiding embarrassment or skirting difficult issues, in concert with pervasively flawed

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<sup>108</sup> Early on, in my readings, I was astounded at the similitude of some western and eastern philosophies. Could it be that contemporary Bushe’s ‘clear leadership’ and Henley’s ‘social and communal leadership’ rest firmly on solid ancient shoulders?

perception-generation, according to Bushe, inevitability results in misunderstanding, causing “the poor interpersonal dynamics that seem to plague all organizations” (Bushe, 2001, p. 3). This tendency is exacerbated by acculturated expectations for harmony and ‘good people skills.’ It appears that our cultural understanding, rooted in uber-politeness, of the “‘right way’ to treat other people” (Ibid) contributes to the problem, yet is resolvable by simply speaking ‘truth to power’ and each other.

There is a certain poignancy, specific to this project, in Bushe’s (2001) observation of professionals’, particularly accountants’, professional immersion in measurable objective truths, which contributes to a commonly held view that they have ‘poor people skills.’ In BC’s college environs, many educators are first and foremost professionals in a non-educational discipline. For instance, virtually all business programs require accounting professors to maintain a professional accounting designation<sup>109</sup>, whereas, until recently, few required graduate degrees or educational training. This professional orientation<sup>110</sup> presents challenges in transforming high performing, left-brain dominant, professionals into engaged educators. I have found the minority voice of ‘closet intellectuals’ diminished by the prevalence of instrumental rationality and disinclination to engage in deep discourse or, as Bushe says, in co-creating

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<sup>109</sup> In Canada, the three accounting designations are: Certified General Accountant (CGA); Certified Management Accountant (CMA); Chartered Accountant (CA).

<sup>110</sup> I recall years ago, during a labour dispute involving BC public school teachers, accountants and lawyers scoffing at claims, made by teachers, that they were indeed ‘professionals’, for the reason that teachers were not autonomous to the point of legal responsibility for advice proffered in their professional engagements. Many professionals, I believe, still believe this to be a profound distinction.

intersubjective truths. This is not a reproach; how else are faculty, particularly those from professional disciplines, to cope with ever-increasing responsibilities, pressures to accomplish more with less, little time for meaningful reflection or planning, when narrow, expeditious decision-making is standard?

Communicating clearly, for clear leadership, should not be considered solely the purview of those in authority, but, like all policies and behaviours its impact is enhanced when adopted by authority figures. Faculty are not without power and, being in the business of communicating, could be enormously successful in effecting change if they were to learn and employ clear leadership skills. To the extent that some sense of empowerment comes from within; faculty members, as well as deans, have important roles to play in fostering clear communications within their institutions.

*clear leaders...*

Clear leaders grow cultures of awareness in which experience sharing is considered normal and by being 'aware, descriptive, curious, and appreciative' (Bushe 2004). These skills are, however, are not the characteristics we, in our leader-centric society, typically attribute to strong leaders. Our tendency to imbue leaders with irrationally heroic qualities and expectations factors into 'impoverished leadership' (Henley, 2006). Faculty, looking unrealistically for 'heroic leadership' (Henley, 2006; Mintzberg, 2008) fail to step forward as the dance between leaders and followers falters: "More is projected on the leader than the personhood of most individuals can contain. More is expected of the

leader than any one person can deliver. More power accrues than temptation can forgive" (Henley, 2006, p. 50). I suggest that many, and I include myself, deflect much to our leaders because it was so in the past; I suspect that the collective 'we' cling to a retrospective zeitgeist, unaware of the extent to which the environment in which are now immersed, has changed. It is such awareness that Bushe (2001) addresses in the first of his clear leadership 'skills': awareness, curiosity, descriptiveness, and appreciation.

Being aware requires being in the moment (Brown, 2008). "Knowing your experience means knowing what you observe, think, feel, and want" (Bushe, 2001, p. 116). Conscious of his or her experiences, the 'aware'<sup>111</sup> individual is not as susceptible to shadowy, unconscious drivers. In describing their experience to others, the 'descriptive self' conveys their "thoughts, feelings, observations, and wants" (Bushe, p. 121) relevant to matters at hand. Setting the stage for the dialectic, requisite to mutual understanding, the descriptive individual opens the door for others' understanding and participation in enriching information. 'Curious' individuals are interested in others' experience and taking "a disciplined approach to the cultivation of attention-giving" (Bai, 2001, p. 316) in order to slow one's reactions to others' statements; the curious self's interest in truth, be it intersubjective or objective, enables clarity by seeking out others' 'truths' while allowing them to grow their descriptive self. The 'appreciative

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<sup>111</sup> I refer to Bushe's *aware, descriptive, curious, and descriptive selves*, in this work. Bushe classifies clear leadership 'elements' that compel behaviour into four categories: one's "observations, thoughts, feelings, and wants" (Bushe, 2001, p. 73). In order to become more aware of these unconscious drivers, one needs to develop into "an Aware Self, a Descriptive Self, and a Curious Self" (Ibid), which allow for the "Appreciative Self" (Ibid, p. 179) to attend to the very best of others and their organizations.

self' strives to amplify successes rather focusing on flaws; paradoxically, seeking the positive to resolve the negative. As in *appreciative inquiry*, a process originally developed to change social systems, being appreciative serves to generate collective positive images of the future by exploring the best of what is and has been (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

For leaders to affect change through clear leadership, their demeanour must model aware, curious, descriptive, and appreciative actions. Attention focuses on the actions, behaviours, and presumed motives of those in power positions in contemporary organizations, just as it has throughout the ages. By virtue of subordinates' scrutiny, this phenomenon serves to intensify the effect of clear leadership (Bushe, 2001) as 'followers' emulate leaders' behaviour and the culture graduates to a higher plane of intersubjectivity. Furthermore, by means of their positional authority, leaders have the power to establish the grounds upon which interpersonal clarity is cultivated; a concept particularly relevant to flat organizations in which there is limited oversight. Being overly flat, deans cannot rely on direct supervision, e-communications, rules, or the status quo, rather on the quality of interpersonal relationships to enable and perpetuate clarity. I suggest, leaders' clear communications come first.

Clear communication is dialogical; it can be achieved only by sharing intersubjective truths, by describing one's "experience to others in a way they can hear and understand" (Bushe, 2001, p. 119), and is therefore "the foundation of sympathy and solidarity" (Bai, 2001, p. 310). When leaders dare to share their stories with their employees, the veneer of harmony (Bushe, 2001) breaks down.



Exposing 'truths' eliminates the need for tactical cover-ups to smooth over rough edges. This transparency, in turn, cultivates awareness as knowledge leaches out and clarification emerges; inevitably, the degree of faulty, unconscious perception-generation diminishes.

*limitations...*

Clear communications, and thus clear leadership, rest on a foundation of awareness and reflection, an understanding and acceptance of reality as entertaining multiple representations drawn from one's social imaginary, and an appreciation for intrinsic values rather than instrumental utility. Having an attendant sense of the here and now, and the willingness to share the stories of one's experiences increases intersubjectivity – the quality of relationships so vital to the development of healthy organizational systems. This is particularly true for flat organizations, which rely heavily on the collaboration and innovation of its membership. Paradoxically, the very structure that demands intersubjectivity also acts as a barrier to its adoption or practice. Because "authority is dispersed widely" (Bushe, 2001, p. 13) throughout flat organizations and manifested in many individuals clear leadership is crucial, if these organizations are to function at the high levels expected of them. With heavy reliance on electronic media, the practicalities of horizontalization, in the form of their attendant technologies, demands our attention. The pervasiveness of communications technologies, for instance, enables the dissemination of information throughout organizations quickly and efficiently; it is questionable, however, whether this is accomplished

effectively and, in my view, it generally does not represent 'clear' communication. Contemporary flat organizations' inherent reliance on electronic communication appears to erode the opportunity and capacity to communicate face-to-face, even our willingness to do so. The fault lies, not in the pervasiveness of technology nor the technology per se, but in human behaviours, explored in previous chapters, that conspire to expand the ingenuity gap. These human, rather than technological, foibles are endemic to all aspects of organizational, professional, and personal being. I urge leaders not to underestimate technology's indirect capacity to undermine our ability to establish inclusive, trusting relationships (explored in previous chapters) and engage in the dialectic essential to clear communications. A further limitation may result from the tendency of working groups, such as peer administered academic departments, to function less as 'teams' and more as 'tribes' (Bushe, 2004) and the problems associated with failure to recognize the difference.

### *introducing the tribe...*

As institutions trend towards decentralized autonomous departments, the tasks, functions, structure, and make-up of work groups command attention. Leaders must first recognize the reality of groups within their organization – their structures, tasks and functions, and the degree of interdependence between group members – remaining mindful of the quality of relationships arising thereof. Problems are inevitable if leaders erroneously misperceive the form and function of working groups – the danger of “treating non-teams like teams,”

which results in “the wreckage of well intentioned efforts” (Bushe, 2004, p. 1) . Bushe<sup>112</sup> (2004) differentiates “tribes” (Ibid, p. 2) and “federations” (Ibid), from what many would consider to be teams. In my interpretation of Bushe’s (2001) clear leadership theory, there is an inferred team orientation and a subtle sense of the pervasively present supervisor or team leader: “empowered organizations still require some hierarchy for focus and control” (Bushe, 2001, p. 13). Indeed, the representation of an organization as a ‘nexus of contracts’ (Scott, 2003) requires that senior management have the authority to bind their organization to agreements. However, the tribal orientation of peer administered academic departments does not fit the common notion of flat organizations exclusively structured around teams, with supervisory team leaders and middle managers to direct, supervise, and act as a conduit to senior management. Many organizations are considerably flatter.

Of particular relevance to this project is the characterization of a “tribe” (Bushe, 2004, p. 2), which has a strong parallel with the peer administered academic department. Tribes experience common group goals and purposes with which members identify; members nonetheless work independently with limited interdependence. This autonomy drives a certain formality that is more ‘polite’ than between team members. Such staid interaction is common in peer administered academic departments that, while civil, may represent the appearance of harmony rather than robust personal connections. In the tribe,

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<sup>112</sup> See the paper, subsequent to *Clear Leadership*, entitled *Managers Want Tribes, Not Teams: An invitation to Re-think Teambuilding* (Bushe, 2004).

successes and failures are experienced individually, although this is not necessarily at the expense of cohesiveness and sense of community. In contrast, a team experiences considerable mutual interaction and member interdependence; hence, the team 'wins' or 'loses' as a team. A team's successes or failures are collectively shared and not attributed to any particular member; team members share mutual interests and agency in achieving common objectives, which necessitates and normalizes regular, open communication. Contrary to conventional wisdom, not every group of people working together technically comprises a team; I cannot help but draw the conclusion that this fact is not lost on faculty peers. I do not, however, intend this as an outright denial of faculty teams; indeed, many institutions form effective teams and, even in the tribal context, faculty may do so, periodically coming together for particular projects.

A "federation" (Bushe, 2004, p. 2), which best describes the collective role of deans, serves more as a formal, although somewhat competitive, alliance generally operating under a common management or budgetary umbrella. Federations are comprised of representatives of departments, groups, or even ideologies. Often colleagues have few common interests and little interdependence; their realms of responsibility, such as academic schools, generally function independently. Communications and processes are generally formal and may be punctuated by conflict and competitive behaviours in a contest for resources or recognition (Bushe, 2004). An unnerving prospect may be unfurling, I suspect, in some special purpose teaching universities, whereby

the extreme autonomy of some faculty and departments is so far removed from a team orientation as to becoming noticeably federated.

Rather than naively presuming that all working groups are teams, and having conventional but misguided confidence in that model, mindful understanding of working groups is essential. I suggest the peer administered academic department model represents a vestige of the community college narrative, a story that needs retelling in a “different way of knowing, a narrative or dialogical dimension” (Henley, 2006, p. 85). As the intransigence of an externally prescribed model makes that unlikely, it is essential that deans have a realistic understanding of department functioning in order to apply appropriate leadership strategies and nurture trusting, sustainable relationships.

*leading the tribe...*

Thornton (Networked Government, 2007) underscores the importance of trust for organizational efficacy. High-trust environments nourish effective groups, facilitating their maturation from pockets of interacting individuals to effective groups. Thornton’s insights echo those of Bai (2001) and Bushe (2001)—sharing one’s experiences through clarifying dialogue as a means of nurturing trust establishes webs of connections and strengthens systems. Faculty deans and colleagues rely heavily on trust—the essence of goodwill, which, according to de Waal’s (2009) primate studies, develops out of long-term, close interaction. People want respect and have their own cultural expectations. Hallett (2009) points out that leaders expect respect for their position in the same way as

employees want respect for their ideas. He determines this to be particularly relevant in education, whether at the grade or graduate level where conflict, arising out of educators' resistance to intrusion on their sacred autonomy, is visited on leaders who fail to take the time to build relationships necessary in cultivating mutual respect (Ibid). I suspect this pitfall also applies to fragile faculty relationships. At this point, I imagine some scoffing and predictable canon: 'we're professionals,' 'no one needs to tell us,' or 'waste of time.' Such one-dimensional, yet common, responses reflect the misunderstandings and false interpretations that prevail in the absence of intersubjectivity. The failure to communicate clearly and develop trusting relationships illustrates the circularity of weak connections, which serve to undermine, rather than strengthen, systems.

*the myth of common noble causes...*

Group cohesion is difficult to achieve, particularly if individual members' social values are not common to the group. Some challenge the conventional belief "that shared vision and common goals are needed for people to work together effectively" (Bushe, 2004, p. 4) by questioning our reliance on common goals, or the sense of group identity, or the group's capacity to satisfy members' expectations that group ideals will unite diverse individuals. Bushe suggests that more research is needed into "the processes by which people come to identify with collective, whether they be groups, organizations, communities or whatever" (Ibid). Expounding on this area of uncertainty, I look to Kakabadse

(2009) for insight into this less-than-popular view by debunking yet another commonly held 'truth,' which I refer to as the myth of common noble causes.

We are accustomed to thinking of social institutions as being peopled by collegial, munificent beings, whereas we presume that hard-driven, profit-seeking firms fall heavily to the other extreme. However, Kakabadse's (2009) findings challenge these conventional presumptions, determining that the opposite is more likely to prevail. Kakabadse finds high levels of collaboration in 'cut-throat' organizations, which he conjectures arises from the clarity by which goals are articulated and resourced. Such organizations, he found, surprisingly are often accompanied by 'benign politics.' On the other hand, he concludes that philanthropic institutions are rife with conflict arising from individuals' assumptions of their mandate – their 'meaning' of their work and that of their organization – that is at variance with that of colleagues or stakeholders. I, too, find this perplexing, yet, recall the unmatched collegiality of tax auditor colleagues: left-brained enforcers of taxation! To this day, their camaraderie and cooperation remains unsurpassed.

*practicable suggestions...*

I look to Thornton (Networked Government, 2007) for practicable suggestions on how to establish such camaraderie and maintain trust in flat organizations; he suggests that credibility and respectfulness are paramount. First, leaders must establish credibility by creating relationships and standing by commitments made, not, contrary to popular belief, by demonstrating one's

competence or credentials. My colleagues and I observe leaders, particularly those new to the role and ironically those who have been in leadership positions for perhaps too long, 'trying too hard' to establish their credibility by means of aggrandizing gestures of confidence, control, power, or experience that shun rather than invite camaraderie. Leaders must be respected and to be respected, one must be respectful. This reflects an aspect of individualism corroborated by Bibby's 2005 survey findings<sup>113</sup>. In Canada, he identified major shifts towards individualism, gratification, and pluralism, and away from a sense of deference, loyalty, and community. The survey, contrary to popular belief in the decline of civility, indicates that values such as civility, caring, compassion, and generosity are actually more highly valued by the 'post-boomer' generation than the 'boomer' generation (Bibby, 2007). I consider this to be particularly relevant in academe and, daily, see the phenomenon played out in the manner of our students, who are caring and equally respectful to each other as to those in authority. One need only look to interactions between educators and learners to understand its value: a quality common to exceptional educators is the respect afforded their students, invariably reciprocated. Thornton (Networked Government, 2007) suggests that respectful relationships are not based on authority, but on simple strategies such as collaborating and maintaining open communications. Discussing difficult issues, whether personal or professional, encouraging authentic feedback and recognizing members' contributions are

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<sup>113</sup> Reginald Bibby, author and trends researcher, has conducted national surveys of adults in Canada, every five years from 1975 to 2005.



crucial. Interestingly, he categorizes professional development as ‘respectful.’ Indeed, I certainly bear witness to ‘should know’ invective served up both as backlash and defence of faculty members and deans alike. We may consider reflecting back in time when we first recognized that ‘soft’ skills require training, and implement professional development programs focussed on improving (clarifying) communications, particularly in settings rich in technology.

Thornton (Ibid) suggests that ‘playing fair’ is essential; indeed to play fair is to thwart rankism. Being ‘nobodied’ by any form of rankism – perpetuating ‘isms’ by bullying, withholding information or recognition, cronyism, or taking credit for others’ work – destroys trust and thereby, motivation and empowerment. Maintaining a meritocracy is essential.

Overall, Thornton (Networked Government, 2007) favours the notion of small, stable groups as an effective vehicle for building trust by qualifying their use ‘wherever possible,’ referring to the de-stabilizing effect of workers’ mobility on their relationships. In this regard, his contributions apply to either a team or tribal orientation. Many post-secondary institutions are challenged by faculty and staff’s separation, geographically and temporally. The inability to sustain relationships requisite to building trust is a major unexpected consequence of expansion. Building trust amongst peers requires sustaining small groupings of individuals who will have the time, approximately two years (Ibid), not only to accomplish tasks expected of them, but also to build trusting relationships with joy, curiosity, and alacrity. Leaders must embody credibility, respectfulness, and fairness in order to build trust with subordinates who, in turn, require direction,

resources, and structure to develop trustful relationships amongst themselves. Leaders, open to sharing ideas, who are aware, credible, respectful, and fair create cultures in which employees feel safe enough to share their own and listen to others' 'stories,' breaking down interpersonal barriers and misperceptions that impinge upon clear communications.

*inculcating a social and communal view...*

I suggest the overarching elements of clear leadership to be fundamental in improving communication and clarity, thereby facilitating trust, collaboration, cooperation, and mutuality. However, the ubiquity of management presence in the form of a team leader, supervisor or manager, can not be presumed of the extreme flattened model of some peer administered academic departments. To this end, I suggest inculcating a social and communal perspective, an overarching umbrella so to speak. Hints of leader-centricity are eclipsed by "distributed intelligence" (Henley, 2006 p. 70) – the clarity of understanding achieved when clear leadership skills feature in institutional cultures, inclusiveness, consideration for others and the everyday, as advocated in Henley's social and communal view of leadership. Socially, communally, and spiritually created leadership is central in purposing common interests and actions towards common goals (Ibid). Henley's communal view, or communion, suggests "an 'interdependent view' in which self, other and the world are inexorably connected" (Ibid, p. 15) – a spiritual connection. To borrow another's

metaphor: tying tom-cats by the tail achieves union but not communion<sup>114</sup>. As we bear witness to the autonomy faculty enjoy in increasingly federated cultures, conducting their perceived roles in detached and disenchanting ways, could it be that we have union but little communion in our institutions?

We no longer commune face-to-face, compile our own rhetoric, or directly share information, relying instead on aggregated or social media to do so. We are also far removed from our immediate and broader environment. The inability to evaluate and communicate with others, or our surroundings, is increasing our susceptibility to the misunderstandings that flow from flawed perceptions. Living in an age of ample opportunity, wealth, and safety, still leaves many insidiously out of sorts, an effect, Henley (2006) attributes to our reversing experience<sup>115</sup> with reflection. ‘Reflecting,’ without first fully ‘experiencing’ a particular phenomenon in the real world – paralleling Bushe’s (2001) concept of perceptions being prematurely generated without regard to the ‘truth’ – removes us from the phenomenal world (Henley, 2006). Simply put, we are not aware of, nor do we apply ourselves to our surroundings; we tend to fit our rationalizations to our observations. Thwaites (2009) claims this to be typical of ‘left-brained’ western cultures, that encourage rational decision-making and

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<sup>114</sup> From an aged Lutheran minister’s sermon, early in the 1970’s.

<sup>115</sup> Bushe’s and Henley’s use of the term ‘experience’ requires clarification. Bushe: “I will call this stream of percepts, and your internal reaction to those percepts, your experience.” (Bushe, 2001, p. 7) “And so a fundamental truth is that you, I, and everyone else all create our own experience.” (Ibid, p. 8). Henley: “From a Buddhist point of view, the world, as we experience it through perception, has an immanent and sacred quality. When we declutter our states of mind, the sacredness of the human mind and our human experience is self-evident. By self-evident I mean that we do not need to manufacture it” (Ibid, p. 9).

acculturate children to focus rather than explore<sup>116</sup>. This phenomenon follows us to the workplace as exploration, requisite to creativity and innovation, is lost to instrumental reason. Elements of modernity have made it so. Rather than noticing the coolness of the air, we look to a thermometer to determine the temperature; we rely on a vehicle's instruments, posted road signs and police presence to determine whether we are driving too fast; we no longer 'hunt and gather,' but 'scavenge' food in sterile shops and rely on business advisors to build capital; we live in safety assured by building codes, policing and emergency services; and to a certain extent, assign even our children's well-being to the expertise of others. I suggest our diminished sense of our aware, curious, descriptive, and appreciative selves and the lack of intersubjective clarity contributes to this phenomenon, further narrowing our perceptions and contributing to our atomistic work and life-styles.

*communion, beyond union...*

The expression of common goals, whether in policy or projects, is more likely to materialize when founded upon clarity and deliberation emanating out of the sharing-clarifying dialectic. Our organizations, representing a 'nexus of contracts,' (Scott, 2003) are shaped by collective intention-directed actions informed by our perceptions and discourse. This interconnectedness has the

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<sup>116</sup> In some regards, we can explain our separation from the *phenomenal world* by neuroscience. Brian Thwaites (2009) explains that North Americans have a real appreciation for left-brain thinkers; the left hemisphere of the brain is associated with language, analysis, writing, reading, math, grammar, while the right side is associated with imagery, rhythm, emotions, symbolism, syntheses, dreams. People differ in brain dominance; Thwaites emphasizes that 'nice' people, who are well-rounded and aware, tend to be balanced between the two, whereas problems of misperception and miscommunication are common with strong left or right brain dominance (Ibid).

potential to strengthen or weaken our relationships. However, cultures infused with intersubjective clarity allow clear and, when necessary, frank discussions of difficult issues that serve to empower those that participate, and benefit those peripheral to them. Thorny issues and complex tasks are then more likely to be undertaken with alacrity that derives from individuals' confidence in the integrity of the information at hand and of clear understanding between members. This cannot help but build goodwill between peers who, imbued with extraordinary responsibilities, may otherwise look to 'strong leadership' that inevitably disappoints:

We have this obsession with "leadership." Its intention may be to empower people, but its effect is often to disempower them. By focusing on the single person, even in the context of others, leadership becomes part of the syndrome of individuality that is sweeping the world and undermining organisations in particular and communities in general (Mintzberg, 2006, para. 9).

Looking to the authority in others or imposing one's will "in the absence of a feeling for their relevance and impact on others" (Henley, 2006, p. 30) rarely manifests in ideal outcomes, whereas co-created goals, to which members can relate, are more likely achieved. Recognizing and nurturing the inter-connections between community, members, and the real world facilitates this maturing of the system and strengthens 'webs' of connections. Groups, informed by trusting, sharing, clarifying deliberations are able to sustain the relationships, clarity, and leadership fluidity that serve to dignitarize their environs and foster innovation. My intention is to insinuate clear leadership as a

vehicle to achieve respectful and inclusive discourse, central to cooperation between individuals, and also in the broader sense between community members, regardless of their roles. In this manner, behaviours that are rooted in human unawareness, fearfulness, or grasping are softened by a collective sense of belonging and trust. The responsibility for achieving such communion rests on the shoulders of all community members.

*conclusion...*

In this thesis, I presented an alternative leadership style to the “management by deeming” (Mintzberg, 2006, p. 2) that is common in special purpose teaching universities, in the form of clear and mindful leadership. Geared to deans, but applicable to all in leadership roles, I suggest the remedy to some pressing issues rests not with what they need to do, but who they need to be, which is a way of being that is trusting and trustworthy, communicative, clear, empathetic, and aware. Through clarity and truth, which may indeed demand courage, misperceptions are resolvable and through trust, established through stable relationships, stakeholders are drawn into the sharing dialectic. It is up to leaders to not only ‘set the stage,’ but also provide the stage, yet not manage it; to provide information, resources, recognition, support, and even sanctuary with which to empower faculty members, but not control them. It is leaders’ role to facilitate mutual agency, unity and purpose, and unleash distributed intelligence by embracing and modelling clear leadership in its social and communal expression. It is up to faculty to step onto that stage, contribute to the discourse and further the building of clarity, collaboration, and trust.

## EPILOGUE

At last, I shall give way to words I have often thought – that our way of being represents the paradox of life, simultaneously precious and banal, important and inconsequential, powerful and fragile, invincible and vulnerable. This is the background of our existence, the see-saw of everyday life that, at times, overwhelms us and thereby robs our resolve. In my view, we should strive to embrace the best of being human in forming a more dignitarian culture; a possibility we are privileged to share with that small segment of humankind, by virtue of history and culture, enabled by modernity's march towards to democratization, individuality, self-direction, flattened hierarchies, globalism, and technological advances.

Whatever our individual motivations, and they are many, others are likewise motivated; unconsciously, we seek them out. We reflect who we are by who and what we seek – by where we choose to live and work, who we play and work with, what we learn and reflect upon – and how we choose to treat others. I suggest that our educational institutions are fine places to work, play, and learn; fine enough that we dare not presume upon them qualities that do not exist, but strive to imbue them with the qualities we treasure, by the way we choose to be:

Dignity is to a dignitarian society what liberty is to a libertarian society and equality is to an egalitarian society—the touchstone. The basic tenet of a dignitarian—in contrast to an egalitarian—society is that it does not seek to abolish, equalize or level ranks, but rather holds that, regardless of rank, we are all equal when it comes to dignity. It follows that we must all have a fair chance to seek the dignity that comes from contributing the best we have to offer.... As with liberty, dignity is most readily defined in the breach. As individuals, we know at once when we're treated with disrespect, and for good reason (Fuller, 2009, p. 3).

There is much yet to explore; firstly, towards honouring ancient wisdom, I intend to further my exploration of mindfulness, which I encountered by happenchance and, being the initial inspiration for this work, I believe deserves further effort, exploration, and learning. Secondly, this project has drawn me to speculate on the disconnect between the professional orientation of educators and those in the professions: accountants, engineers, lawyers, and medical doctors, to name a few. In Canada, as elsewhere, we are experiencing critical shortages of such professionals. This is reflected in the long-standing problem our post-secondary institutions encounter in attracting and retaining such professionals as educators. I would like to explore this phenomenon, and what it takes to transform high-functioning professionals into engaged educators and less atomistic colleagues. Perhaps these two endeavours will have synergy...but, that remains to be seen.



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