

SUCCEEDING IN EMPOWERING OTHERS:
SOCIAL FACTORS THAT ASSIST IN CREATING AND SUSTAINING
EMPOWERING ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research rises out of the perceived gap between rhetoric and reality in the congregational life of the church in the United States. Using the research tools of autoethnography and case study, it investigates the life settings of the researcher and the interior organisational dynamics of three cases, a for-profit, a non-profit and a church organisation. The research considers how organisational pre-conditions and traits and processes, leadership behaviour and perspectives, and the perceived benefits of an empowering environment impacts the ability of the organisation to implement and sustain an empowering environment.

Three pre-conditions, namely, a flexibility in organisational behaviours, the total commitment of the primary leader, and a particular view of people were found to be essential. Four relational traits of voice, trust, authentication, and connectivity were discovered to generate a relational environment that was conducive to an empowering culture. No particular leadership style was found to be essential, only that the style could embrace the elements enumerated above. Personal and organisational benefits were outside the normative organisational expectations of profit or other numerical measurements and closer to aspects of relationality and energy. There appears to be no significant difference between the church and other organisational types in how empowerment functions. I conclude by reflecting on practical aspects and how the research journey impacted the researcher.

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CHAPTER ONE

ARRIVING AT A RESEARCH GOAL

1.1 Introduction

It is my intention, using autoethnography and case study methodology, to explore what features, either pre-conditions, organisational traits, leadership styles, or perceived benefits, may assist churches or other organisations to sustain an empowering work environment.

Most research finds a genesis somewhere in the personal life or perspective of the researcher. To display this allows the reader and user of research data to possess another tool in assessing the validity and usefulness of the research. The following chapter will articulate part of my personal and conceptual journey in defining, then structuring this quest for answers to a series of questions around the organisational practice of empowering people. Given the nature of the research, I will, as well, suggest a possible vantage point from which to locate the research.

1.1.1 A professional genesis

I have virtually no recollection of not being connected to the church. As a professional I went to the accepted religious institution of my parent denomination. I began pastoring a church at the age of twenty-three while still in college. Following graduation I was ordained and became a professional clergyman and for the next thirty

years I worked as a church planter, pastor, regional director, and denominational leader in a particular protestant denomination. My job as regional director involved oversight of the pastor/leaders as well as the internal leadership and organisational health of twenty-five churches, and casting vision for the future.

The impact of this immersion into a church culture went unchallenged by me in any substantive way. This was due in part to personal issues, but also because the denomination had a very particular culture that it defended and protected fiercely through means that included shame and exclusion. To question was seen by many influential leaders, as both an act of spiritual rebellion and as organisational disloyalty. I had experienced no outside church reality and knew that most were held with suspicion by my denomination and its leaders whom I had been taught to see as both spiritual and nearly infallible.

Never the less, due to a highly analytic aptitude, according to the Myers-Briggs analysis, and significant interaction with other leaders and thinkers through reading and leadership settings, perplexing personal questions began to surface and I eventually started to give them voice.

The result of this, despite my high profile and credibility within the denomination, was the subtle and then overt attempt to shame and exclude.

The evangelical branch of the American church is theologically conservative with its focus on the authority of the Bible, centrality of Jesus Christ, and theological formulations. But it appears also to be generally socially conservative as well. This may not seem problematic when dealing with propositions but when dealing with human need and organisational systems it appears to create, at least in some settings, alarming levels

of disconnect between rhetoric, reality, and perception resulting in an organisation that is, to differing degrees, unaware of the human consequences of how it functions.

This can be highlighted by a movement within the evangelical church subculture which started around the 1970s to articulate a model of pastoral leadership that suggests that pastoral care and pastoral leadership are two different things and that many who seem adequate in pastoral care and perhaps other religious skills like preaching are often inept at leadership. Ted Engstrom and Ed Dayton were early leaders in this movement when providing leadership to World Vision (Engstrom 1983; Engstrom and Dayton 1979). Later, it was modeled by Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral in California (Schuller 2002). Perhaps two leaders took this focus to another level. Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek in Chicago became very intentional about partnering with skilled leaders, both sacred and secular, including American Presidents, Harvard School of Business professors, economic behaviourists, business consultants, and pastors of successful enterprises in the sacred world (Hybels and Hybels 1997; Hybels 2011). This shift has created significant tensions. For example, in the competitive world of business, two traits, speed and innovation, are considered allies, whereas in the sacred world these same traits are often viewed as incongruent with the enterprise, if not downright dangerous (Opera Software 2011; Meyer 2010). Another leader, voted in a recent year as the top business consultant in the United States, spent his early leadership years in the church and then moved to the business world. John Maxwell, perhaps the leading author of leadership materials in the general business market shared that his father told him to go to the local denominational college for Bible and theology training,

and then to get out as quickly as possible so that the thinking of that setting did not damage him for usefulness (John Maxwell, pers. comm.).

In the church setting, leaders like Schuller, Hybels, and Maxwell have lived and proposed a CEO model of pastoral leadership applying something akin to economic sociology, where bottom line issues impact how the organisation is to be structured and managed while maintaining the primary purposes and functions of the Church.

But the application of this leadership model into a socially conservative culture was often muted if not simply rejected as not sacred. The values of speed and innovation were seen as enemies while the true church organisational agenda was cloaked by shadow values that clung to the status quo with a strong protectionist impulse. This protectionist posture had certain consequences, which appear to include designing the internal dynamics of the organisation to maintain homeostasis, and dampening empowering impulses unless they function within narrow and prescriptive boundaries. This favored certain traits and put others in disfavor. Traits like analytic, strategic thinking, inquisitiveness and curiosity, innovation and risk, were held in social disfavor, and occasionally, recast as theologically dangerous. The result was a clash of cultures, which had visible and invisible consequences.

There was a second reality in my church world. While the discourse was on freedom, active participation, and change, among other things, something else was happening. One denominational leader remarked, when asked what bothered him most about his work in the church world, 'People just don't change' (Dan Morgan, pers. comm.). I observed two realities. First, there is often a gap between rhetoric and reality that can reach dysfunctional levels. Second, typical congregational organisation had a

stifling effect on many. But while there might be occasional discourse to address the above, any substantive move, which might include different vocabularies or methodologies, was treated with fear and often with fear, came attack. There was a tacit commitment to previous models of ministry whether effective at a bottom line level or not.

Even in historical settings, any new method designed to expand beyond the present audience often became absorbed and the audience adjusted to insiders. The Sunday School was originally initiated to serve children who were subject to difficult child labor and had no time to learn to read. The Sunday evening service was started to attract people who otherwise would not come to a church service and was held in the evening because people would come to see the new gaslights that were a new invention (Hammett and Pierce 2007, 92). Apologetics or a defense of the Christian faith was originated to explain to people who were not Christians how something like cannibalism was not part of the Christian religion. In each case the primary audience for the method eventually became the insider, namely the Church member, when it was originally targeted to the outsider.

The church, both at a local and denominational level, showed what appeared to be a willingness to ignore realities. It suggested an apparent willingness to maintain loyalty to models that oft times appear to have as their only virtue that someone has a vested interest in them or that they served well in another era. It resulted in a church that often tried to hear and met human need with models that were incompatible with the need.

With a fair amount of relational currency and credibility I was stunned by the vehemence displayed by insiders opposed to substantive change and how quickly my

currency, built up over years of dependability, evaporated. In this season the most disturbing reality, or at least, my perception, was that in the United States no institution speaks more about truth than the evangelical branch of protestant Christianity, yet it seemed that no institution is more resistant to truth about itself.

In the face of the leadership, organisational, and ministry models that appeared, at least partially, resistant and unresponsive to the changing realities in people's lives I began to look for alternatives. I decided to start with myself and find ways to step into a more empowering place and out of the cognitive dissonance in which I was living. Was it probable that people had far more to offer than the present and commonly applied structures were allowing? I also began to consider that if such issues are rooted in organisational structures and values, as well as basic assumptions about people, then the applications may move beyond just the church towards other organisational types such as non-profits and businesses.

1.1.2 A personal genesis

At one point in my professional journey, described above, I decided to move to England and pursue an educational goal. But part of that move was a detaching from the culture that, in part, had always defined me and controlled me. At the same time, in the shadow of my professional crossroad, I began to look critically not only at the church culture but my childhood, family of origin, and immediate culture in which I was raised. Then an additional layer of questions emerged related to the impact of subliminal values and attitudes carried by significant people in my life both in the church and in my immediate and extended family.

Though raised in a home that was, in many respects, a loving home, it was driven by one overriding value, the value of image. I also began to understand that without anyone speaking of it, that value had a deep impact on my life. The fear of humiliation was the driving force behind decisions as wide ranging as spending money or resisting relational confrontation.

I began to develop skills around this primary value. And in the church and around my family of origin I began to live for others. This choice was not altruistic but rather a self-serving mode of protection. If I did what others wanted I could avoid potential incidents of embarrassment. This performance model was seductive and particularly insidious because I was good at many of the things others wanted from me. This success further distanced me from myself and resulted in a continued devaluing of my own giftedness and uniqueness. Some of what was part of my DNA seemed lost or stolen.

So, both church and family required something of me which I did not challenge until it was deeply ingrained. But it had the disempowering impact of taking away choice, or giving the appearance of removing other options.

While fear of humiliation was a primary driving force in family dynamics, my early church experience was in a local church and denomination that was also driven by fear. Nearly everything was a threat and coherence required a small set of approved choices, rules to guide towards those choices, and potential punishment if alternate choices were made.

One day, as a self-understanding tool, I made a list of my heroes. People I liked to be around and admired. It totaled twenty people and as I looked over the list I realized that eighteen of the twenty were in the academic world. They were deans and presidents

of universities. They were authors and teachers. I wondered! Why does this list look so much different than my life looks? And I wondered how I had arrived at this place. How did I choose? I was not conscious of choosing.

There is an assumption in this narrative, that people have a core or preferred identity which can thrive in multiple settings, but however redirected by immediate culture, has a certain type of setting that feels like home. I do not suggest this core or preferred identity is fixed or static, and it is impacted by both nature and nurture. For me, though I had had some measure of success in my chosen field, the church, I realized that I was operating out of a set of skills applied in a public setting that was not part of my core or preferred identity.

So I ask, if nearly nothing directive was said, how did the social system of my home, and church 'speak' to me in a way that assisted in my inability to identify my true passions and, conversely, that I felt compelled, nearly destined, to move in a certain approved direction. The by-product of this feels very disempowering, a missing of something I love. Yet the power of such a systemic call is so great that even today as a grown man in his sixties, when trying to intentionally choose a different path, I feel the pull back to the old and approved patterns. How do social systems speak without speaking and speak with such authority that they participate in causing people, at vulnerable moments, to make choices or have choices made for them that move them away from their desires? And how does such a system generate such blindness?

1.2 Developing a research goal

As I faced professional and personal realities, I was surprised at how closely they intertwined. So I went on a search. I concluded that in both personal and professional settings others and I were disempowered, limited, denied access to what we had to offer. This process happened in ways I did not see or understand. This led to an obvious question. If what I saw and personally experienced was disempowering, how is someone empowered?

1.2.1 A preliminary view

As I began to theorize about what was going on in organisations and social systems I speculated that there was not a clear idea about what empowerment was. But a quick literature review suggested otherwise. Considerable research has been done around the theme of empowerment and while there will always be nuanced variations around any topic, it quickly became clear that there was not much confusion about what constituted psychological empowerment. The work of Spreitzer (1996) and Conger and Kanungo (1988) and others established that for a person to be empowered and a social system to be empowering at least four features needed to be present. Spreitzer (1996, 484) defines them as choice or self-determination, competency, meaning and impact or significance. Self-determination is ‘a sense of choice in initiating and regulating actions.’ It ‘reflects autonomy over the initiation and continuation of work behavior and processes.’ ‘Competence refers to self-efficacy specific to work- a belief in one’s capability to perform work activities with skill.’ Meaning develops ‘between the requirements of a work role and a person’s beliefs, values, and behaviors.’ Impact is ‘the degree to which a

person can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work.’ These four traits together reflect ‘an active, rather than a passive, orientation to a work role.’ For this research, the traits of choice, competency, meaning and impact will underpin my entire work and I will be referring to them regularly.

It is also possible that a particular social system did not know about the above traits. But the evidence is that many organisations have attempted with varying degrees of success to implement and sustain an empowering culture. Thus my view that ignorance was to blame was flawed. Though not all organisations had accessed this data, it was broadly available and understood. My view was not supported by the facts. I was forced to reframe my research assumptions. If it was true that empowering data was broadly available and that many organisations have tried to implement empowerment strategies, aspiring to empower, then something else was going on.

It seemed true from the literature review that even among organisations that sought to implement empowerment strategies, the batting average was poor. Beirne (2006, 81) remarks, ‘Taking a panoramic view of the evidence, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that progress towards any sort of authentic empowerment has been hesitant, and subject to frequent back-sliding and deterioration.’ Though it should be noted that Huczynski and Buchanan (2010, 265-266) identified one group of organisations in which sixty percent felt that empowering efforts had some elements of success. Could it be that a low success rate among organisations seeking to establish empowering cultures was not due to ignorance about what empowerment is, but rather an incomplete understanding about how an empowering environment is developed and sustained? Could the issue be about implementation and application?

1.2.2 Reframing the research questions

Starting anew, I asked a new set of questions: Are there organisational traits and processes that are more compatible with empowerment goals and characteristics? Are there certain leadership types or traits that are a better fit or even required in empowering cultures for such a culture to thrive? In implementation, are there certain organisational qualities that a particular organisation possesses prior to implementation that give an empowerment strategy a better chance of success? And, is the commitment to an empowering culture impacted by how an organisation looks at the bottom line and what kind of outcomes it expects?

Further, inherent in the word 'empowerment' is the concept of power. How does the way power operates in a social setting impact and interface with empowerment goals? Empowerment is not an isolated activity but denotes an exchange, a transaction or transfer. It may not imply the giving of something, for one view would be to conclude that empowerment is releasing something a person already possesses but is repressed, dampened, or inhibited. But even with that definition, we note that no social system is a level playing field. Power is not distributed evenly, and with it rests the potential for not only good but also harm, so trust is impacted by and impacts power. The culture of the United States with its strong disposition to individual independence often intentionally or inadvertently reframes social constructs into individualistic terms. Never the less we are looking for social system realities that invite, cooperate, and facilitate aspects of an empowering environment.

1.2.3 Locating the research

Perhaps an obvious question is, 'where is this research located?' This piece of academic research rises from the domain of the Theology and Religion Department. But a significant amount of the research rests in organisational studies and even sociology. In a number of respects the research shows aspects of being cross-disciplinary in type. But while the research will use ethnographic and organisational studies data, the research questions rise out of a congregational studies context, even though drawing heavily on sociology and organisational studies.

Guest, Tusting and Woodhead (2004, xvi, 2,6) in their helpful book on congregational studies, highlight that in the United States congregational studies have been directed to the relevance of growth and effective church life. They note that other disciplines such as sociology and organisational studies have become intertwined with traditional congregational studies. And Farnsley (2004, 27,28) suggests that the American church functions like an open market reflecting the traits of pluralistic, competitive, and marketing, blurring the lines from the time the church was treated as unique. So within this paradigm my early research questions, while having the verbiage of organisational studies, were driven by a congregational studies focus. As an example, the issue of traits and processes is important because many local churches have processes that are historically determined and not accustomed to typical questions about efficiency and effectiveness. Questions about leadership traits are directly applicable to empowerment questions because in the typical world of many local churches, leadership is pastoral in context and driven by care rather than goal achievement. Beyond that the training given is strongly content driven on successfully executing particular church

functions like worship, preaching, communion, maintaining the church calendar, and presenting theological formations. Note the absence of typical training connected with the marketplace in the United States. And the question about end results is particularly germane for it is non-typical in traditional settings, until the last few decades, to even ask such questions other than for reporting purposes. Using the data to alter marketing or ministry approaches was not part of the internal discourse. So congregations have organisational processes, leadership, and end results. They typically have documents and reporting mechanisms that report and describe them. Yet, often the data is gathered for inadequate reasons. Organisational structure and leadership skills are built on foundations incongruent with the questions and expectations that are being asked of the organisation in the present context.

The broad sweep of this research is due to an underlying assumption, that congregations, along with their unique membership protocols, symbols, rituals and activities, are fundamentally social organisations and the principles of social processes, group dynamics, and organisational behaviour impacts them similarly as non-profits and for-profit organisations.

It seems true in many settings that whether for-profit or church or non-profit, organisations tend towards developing ways or patterns that then appear to be ‘sacred cows.’ Carly Fiorina, once CEO of the giant Hewlett-Packard says that when she was trying to articulate and make changes she was confronted with the phrase that the change was not typical of ‘the Hewlett-Packard way’ (Fiorina 2006). Nevertheless the Christian congregation does face a difficulty that is not typical of the other organisational categories. It suffers from a tendency to deify its choices. Because a congregation often

uses the Bible, considered a sacred book, as a source book, the congregation can often refer to it when evaluating what would be typical organisational issues like how decisions are made or qualifications for leadership, or proposing and implementing change. This use of the Bible as a sourcebook allows them to see themselves as 'other than' other organisations and tempts them to feel their enterprise is not subject to the same organisational laws and maxims that impact and govern the environment of other types of social structures. For example, it is not common for other organisations to consider prayer an alternative to organisational maintenance issues.

It is my contention that this creates a blind spot for leaders and congregants of the local church and denomination to the impact of a congregation's social structure. Therefore this research makes significant use of data from sociology and organisational studies, but with a constant attention to the implications for congregational life. For example, the decision to use three different types of organisations in my case studies, is grounded, in part, on the question of whether the congregation deals with distinctions that make applying typical organisational categories unhelpful. It is my suspicion, however, that no such distinction is warranted and using different types of organisations helps probe that question. I am thus considering the issue of scratching out what may be arbitrary lines between church, business, family, and other social contexts. Is it possible that there are more similarities than differences between good church leadership, effective business management, and wise life skills?

A second consideration is that much of what this research is about has no representative vocabulary in the church though it is in line with the rhetoric of the church. This is for at least three reasons. First, the larger, multi-staff church has taken a more

‘secular’ model of organising and directing its activities, so while committed to many of the typical church purposes, it uses modern management methods for guiding the activities, allocating resources, and evaluating success. While this group of churches represents a small percentage of churches it represents well over fifty percent of people who regularly attend church (Trueheart 1996). Yet most churches are small single cell organisations that have not embraced this new paradigm. In this paradigm confusion, a common vocabulary is slow to develop. Second, the rhetoric of the church is active, namely, ‘go,’ ‘make disciples,’ but the typical activity of the church is conservatory, or content-based over action-based (Kimball 2007, 188-194; Snyder 1980, 71-72). A third issue surrounding the church world is the maxim that twenty percent of the people do eighty percent of the work (Thumma and Bird 2011, xiii). This is a debilitating feature of an organisation with high volunteer components.

Since I am using only one each of three types of organisations I am aware that it reduces any generalisability possibilities in the typical sense. However, if similar answers to the research questions surface in each of the three types, then it would suggest at least two possibilities. The first would be that it would appear that the distinctive features of a congregation may not disqualify it from the organisational patterns and traits that function in other types. Secondly, if there are commonalties that all three types share, this would be a basis for further research to explore to what extent and with what certainty one can conclude that empowerment principles are applied and sustained similarly, regardless of organisation type.

1.3 Summary

As with many, my motivation and focus for this research was impacted by personal experience. That experience, in both professional and private life, intersected around the theme of being part of a controlling, limiting, and eventually debilitating and defrauding culture that often unintentionally stole away part of my preferred self and natural aptitudes as the price of membership. My early response was to hide part of myself and restructure my life around external expectations. Eventually this life became unlivable and I shifted, and in the shifting decided to investigate what had happened to me, knowing that my experience was not uncommon, particularly in the Church.

I looked at what empowered people and discovered that that was already common knowledge. The four traits of empowerment within the literature are choice, competency, meaning and impact. But in the looking discovered that many organisations had a difficult time implementing and sustaining an empowering environment, even after declaring their desire to have one. It appeared that ‘invisible’ qualities erupted and subverted good faith efforts. So I changed my focus to what the traits and processes, the leadership dynamics, the historical requirements, and the expected outcomes, around sustaining an empowering environment might look like, provided such features could be identified and analysed.

What kind of research is this? It is for me a work in congregational studies that uses organisational studies and sociological methodologies to magnify the issue of similarity between the internal dynamics of church life and other organisations because they are all social realities. Such a view widens the vision and tools of congregational

leadership, gives the congregation a new vocabulary to express what is happening and to what it aspires, gives the constantly growing multi-staff church segment of the industry validation in managing the larger church enterprise, and presents a possible paradigm for improving on the standard eighty/twenty model thus increasing involvement.

CHAPTER TWO

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

2.1 Introduction

What kind of tool I use is determined by what kind of task or material I am working with and what I want to do with it. My previous chapter suggests that I am looking for something particular and so choices of methodology need to be harmonized with that pursuit. This chapter and chapter four will outline choices I have made. In reading about theoretical and methodological choices, it has been my observation that the options and couplings are vast and the debates around them are just as vast. I do not propose to answer all the questions that swirl around this topic, but to give a review of why the choices I have made make good sense to me.

Gray's description, 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretation of social life' reflects some of the terrain I am looking at and communicates an interpretivism paradigm (Crotty 1998, 67 cited in Gray 2004, 20). This description exposes the sources of data I will be looking at. Both my experiences and those recorded in the case studies rise out of particular situated cultural settings and are defined, in part, by the historical setting. For example, my father's interpretation of certain events he and I may share in common may be impacted by the historical reality that he went through the 'great depression' in American economic history while I did not. Similarly, my present is occurring in a particular piece of space and time and thus contains a set of variables that will never be exactly the same again. I am after the 'felt experience' and 'personal

meaning' an individual gives to their reality because empowerment depends, in part, on whether a person believes they are empowered to act and thus perhaps to risk. I am interested in whether there is an 'emergent meaning' suggesting that people are in a social network and the meaning of something may not rest in the simple addition of each individual's perceptions. In this case we must, to some degree, understand the whole to understand the parts. The features of perception and dynamic interaction describe part of how empowerment happens. My research must be focused on the perceptions and how they develop, and further that empowerment is not a static trait and so is constantly being constructed and deconstructed.

In the pursuit of the above I have chosen to use literature review, autoethnography and case study methodology as my 'shovels.' Since the literature review is a typical and pervasive model of nearly all social research I will not explain its use, but only say that research is a community activity both in its pursuit and usefulness and partnering with the larger academic community is not only helpful, but wise in developing useful data. Chapters two and four will outline the features of autoethnography and case studies, respectively, and give reasons for their choice.

2.2 What is autoethnography?

At its heart, autoethnography is about making the researcher's own experience 'a topic of investigation' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 733). Sparkes (2000, 21) defines it as 'highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding.' Patton (2002, 85) refers to it as the studying of one's own culture and oneself as part of that culture.

It rests, in part, on the suggestion that ‘token reflection’ is not adequate to explain the context of research and discovery and also on the ‘crisis of representation’ (Wall 2006, 3). In giving the researcher ‘voice’ it is revealing the researcher’s identity (Ivanic 1998 cited in Patton 2002, 88).

As with many terms in the social science field the terms surrounding the methodology of autoethnography have evolved. Ellis and Bochner (2000, 739-741) highlight over sixty terms used in referring to practices common in autoethnographic methodology. Broadly, it is an ‘autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.’ It is marked by a ‘back and forth’ quality as it looks outward on the social/cultural aspects of the personal experience and then inward ‘exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 739). Karl Heider used the term in 1975 when referring to the Dani’s own account of what people do, but David Hayano is credited with using the term first in connection with an anthropologist doing cultural level studies on his own people, so that the researcher is a ‘full insider’ (Hayano, 1975, 100).

While some social scientists have considered the term autoethnography as a subtype of another form of writing, it has become the term of choice to describe studies that try to connect the personal to the cultural, though there is variance on emphasis and disagreement about boundaries and definitions (Ellis and Bochner 2000 739-742; Chang 2008 16-17, 29; Rosaldo 1984, 151 cited in Chang 2008 17).

Meanwhile, among the myriad of terms and definitions, Wall uses three to highlight aspects of what she calls the autobiographical method. The first is heuristic

inquiry rising from phenomenology with an aim to ‘awaken and inspire researchers to make contact with and respect their own questions and problems.’ Moustakas suggests six basic steps: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination in a ‘creative synthesis.’ The second is autobiographical research, which tries to infuse social science ‘with the emotions and person of the researcher.’ This can be particularly helpful where there is a gap in the literature. Personal essay is one type of this method. Of note is that this method often does not proceed in a linear fashion. The third is the personal narrative, which is often considered the ‘typical product of autoethnography’ (Moustakas 1990 cited in Wall 2006, 4-6).

In style and substance autoethnography is written in the first person, in a storytelling mode, repositioning the reader from passive to active, often disclosing personal facts, in non-abstract style, over a period of time (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744). Wall, citing Duncan, notes that the ‘inner dialogue of the researcher was considered valid’ (Duncan 2004, 3 cited in Wall 2006, 7). Interestingly, Wall notes that much of the writing on types of autoethnography tends to be more philosophical than practical (Wall, 2006, 6).

2.3 Where are we? the disorienting world of expanding science

In both the second and third editions of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* edited by Denzin and Lincoln the authors on the chapters on autoethnography clearly feel the topic cannot be addressed in purely propositional terms and generate a narrative both as an example and as a ‘way’ of communicating about the research method (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This alone may suggest that the extension of

qualitative research methodology to autoethnography is a reason to believe a threshold has been crossed. The method may imply a movement beyond a simple extension of established methodological paradigms. Two facts, that the world is now a village with direct and immediate access and that the world is often seen through a post-modern lens, challenges an established model that one goal in research is, if not to erase, certainly to diminish the presence of self in order to authenticate research and its conclusions. This view has now been revised, to wit, self is always not only unavoidable, but integral to understanding process and outcomes. If true, this suggests that only in the shadow of that reality can research be reviewed, evaluated, and properly utilized. For example, an important assumption in autoethnography is that 'reality is neither fixed nor entirely external but is created by, and moves with, the changing perceptions and beliefs of the viewer' (Duncan 2004, 4). As Reed-Danahay (1997, 1) suggests, in the post-colonial, post-modern world personal narratives are informed by a different set of questions than earlier research used.

It may be that much research is starting at a different place. There was a time when a starting assumption was that the researcher's experience would not be a topic for investigation (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 733). In fact, to move from third person passive where the researcher is virtually invisible except possibly in the introduction and conclusion to a first person narrative was to not only violate received convention but disqualify the research as a 'delinquent form of expression,' and 'violates everything I've been taught about sociological research' as one researcher put it (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 734, 738).

It would appear that there was little reflection that such a model of convention, namely excluding the researcher, advising invisibility, itself weighted the research, predisposing the research to particular frameworks, favouring a particular type of knowledge, often abstract and categorical (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 734). For example, in the old paradigm writing was simply the way we communicated findings. The idea that writing is not just an act of declaration but in the writing evidence is uncovered, that ‘in the process we come to understand self and others’ and that this was also research, was new (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 738).

Making the researcher visible gives the evaluator another angle from which to view the research and while the disclosures of the researcher cannot be taken at face value, anymore than other aspects of the research, the added dimension can only be helpful in evaluating. It seems plausible that the kind of writing that autoethnography requires is not the typical genre of the scientist. Many scientists might well want to avoid the ‘disclosure’ that is part of this type of writing (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 738).

2.4 Where did we come from? The standards of empiricism

Arthur P. Bochner writes, ‘I was socialized into the legacy of empiricism’ with its ‘generalisable abstractions and unified knowledge’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 734). In such a world, handbooks which compiled state-of-the-art essays were written by experts, but written as though ‘they were anonymous.’ ‘Who’ was not part of the reality. But the ‘passive voice erases subjectivity and personal accountability.’ The traditional view was that only the process had to be available and visible for evaluation. In today’s world such a view not only seems naïve but impossible, at least with certain types of research. The

move to research methods that include personal narrative start with a different voice and authority, so data is looked at differently (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 735).

Muncey (2005, 5) suggests that the practices of standard empiricism have ‘as their central theme the rules of science: that is, the desire for objectivity and the defining challenges of reliability and validity. Within these tightly constrained parameters, a special language defines and delimits what is included and excluded.’ Did such practices impact what could be studied and what ‘shape’ the object was required to have. For example Bochner laments that in his specialty of human communication, it was for years studied as an ‘object’ rather than a dynamic process (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 743). The power of this tradition been so strong that researchers using even well established qualitative methods are ‘continually asked to defend their research as valid science’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2000 cited in Wall 2006, 2).

This research model is not only about making the researcher present and known, but also making the reader present, ‘allowing readers to feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it, join actively in the decision points that define an autoethnographic project, and consider how their own lives can be made a story worth telling’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 735). In this new research environment some previous constructs, like insider/outsider, are ‘too simplistic for an adequate understanding of the processes of representation and power’ (Reed-Danahay 1997, 4).

How did this happen? First, perhaps science is its own worst enemy. Despite its conventions, its nature, when functioning authentically, is to continue to press out to new data and new horizons. This pressing not only impacts the thirst for knowledge, but the

revising, augmenting, and adding to the methodological toolbox, for the pursuit for new information sometimes requires new tools that are compatible with the data pursued.

Beyond this there appears to be at least four connected causes for a new way of doing research. First, there developed in the scientific community a growing dissatisfaction with the scope of empirical research, both in terms of what it left out and how the method impacted results, through vocabulary, for example. Beyond that, the general traits of the members of the scientific community caused research to be framed in particular ways (Ellis and Bochner 2000 735, 738). Some began to ask if there were not other ways of knowing and gathering that knowledge (Wall 2006, 2). At least part of this shift is connected to the ‘crisis of confidence’ in social sciences. Bochner explains it this way:

I began by reading Kuhn (1962), who showed that the building-block model of science lacked foundations; then Rorty (1982), Toulmin (1969), and other philosophers who illustrated how the ‘facts’ scientists see are inextricably connected to the vocabulary they use to express or represent them; Lyotard (1984) debunked the belief in a unified totality of knowledge, questioning whether master narratives were either possible or desirable; poststructuralist and deconstructionist writers such as Barthes (1977), Derrida (1978, 1981), and Foucault (1970), effectively obliterated the modernist conception of the author, altering how we understand the connections among author, text, and readers (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 735).

Bochner continues, in the same sentence, to list eight more authors and multiple strands that show a fragmenting of the previous order of scientific research.

Second, within the culture at large there was a proliferation of ‘personal writing,’ and scientists and researchers are part of their culture (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744). McCorkel and Myers (2003, 200) highlight it this way, ‘Concerns about the situatedness of the knower, the context of discovery, and the relation of the knower to the subjects of her inquiry are demons at the door of positivist science. The production of [what has

always been considered to be] ‘legitimate’ knowledge begins by slamming the door shut.’ Even further there is the challenge that ‘traditional research and writing conventions create only the illusion that the knowledge produced is more legitimate’ (Wall 2006, 4).

Third, the emergence of the post-modern view of realities, increased dissatisfaction with received conventions and generated new ways of looking and expressing reality. It resulted in altering the way research and its purpose was looked at (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 735). Ultimately, science does not occur in a vacuum because scientists do not live in a vacuum.

Nevertheless Atkinson (2006, 400-404) is quick to point out that the ‘kind of reflexivity implied by autoethnography’ has been a central part of ethnographic repertoire for years and that recent scholars are overstating the solo impact of post-modernity and that the ‘author’s own biographical engagement in a given social world’ has been a common reality in sociological/anthropological works. Atkinson further argues that the researcher is ‘thoroughly implicated in the phenomena that he or she documents.’ His disagreement with present models of autoethnography is that it is still research so the commitments to ‘scholarly purpose, its theoretical bases, and its disciplinary contributions’ are more significant and meaningful than simply a quest for ‘personal fulfillment on the part of the researcher.’ He objects to the notion that looking inward is somehow now to be considered more valuable than looking outward to the ‘intellectual constituency informed by social theory.’

Along with the emergence of the post-modern paradigm was the emergence of a changing demographic within the ethnographic research community with increased participation from women, lower-class ethnic and racial groups and Third and Fourth

World scholars (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 741). Because the world talks differently, functioning more like a village, and because the world looks differently, in part because of the post-modern lens, it results in the reader asking a different or at least an expanded set of questions and because the world talks differently, and the world looks differently, and the reader is different, the author/researcher often desires a different or expanded set of research goals that reach beyond linear, propositional, abstract data. This has created conflict for as Muncey (2005, 7) explains 'research has never been very successful in accepting new ideas that do not conform to received wisdom.'

2.5 Personal narrative and the goals of research

With the realities presented in the previous section, social science research began looking for different tools to answer the reality of a changing paradigm and the narrative or autoethnography was one of the developing tools. A primary example is what Bochner calls narrative inquiry as represented by evocative narratives. Narrative inquiry are stories that in part 'create the effect of reality, showing characters embedded in the complexities of live moments of struggle, resisting the intrusions of chaos. . .and incoherence trying to preserve or restore continuity. . .in the face of the unexpected.' And Bochner calls these stories evocative narratives, contrasting the expressive and dialogic goals of writing and story with more 'traditional orientations of mainstream, representational social science' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744). Within this methodology Van Maanen (1995, 8-9 cited in Reed-Danahay 1997, 5) explains that there are four types of writing that are functioning as 'alternatives to ethnographic realism,' namely: confessional, dramatic, critical, and autobiographical. In confessional writing the

attention is on the ethnographer rather than the ‘natives.’ In autobiographical writing the culture of one’s own group is ‘textualized.’

The personal narrative is important both because it reflects a changing environment in which research is done and because it reflects an adjusted set of research goals. Evocative narrative, in particular, has a number of goals, which usually lie outside common research models in pursuit of generalisations and abstract propositional statements. This type of autoethnography is interested in inviting the reader in, to provoke a response, and considers this just as essential as the ‘controlling and knowing’ research models (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744-748). It is using one’s personal life experience ‘to generalise to a larger group or culture’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000. 737, 748).

First, evocative narrative writing is passionate about inviting the reader in. Bochner goes so far to say that narrative rises or falls on its capacity to provoke a reader’s response, generating active engagement, to help the reader put himself or herself in the author’s place. Deck (1990, 26 cited in Reed-Danahay 1997, 26) believes the native expert has an ‘authentic first-hand knowledge of culture [which] is sufficient to lend authority to the text.’

If the first goal is about the reader, the second is about the author/researcher. The writing of evocative narrative is intended to generate understanding, increased coherence to the writer’s personal experience and provide a context for personal growth. The ‘self is indistinguishable from the life story it constructs for itself’ so the narrative brings self to the research enterprise (Ellis and Bochner 2000 744-746, 748).

A third goal is to elicit a response beyond just analysis from both the author and the reader so that it is a 'moral work' breaking down barriers and previous constraints (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744, 747).

A fourth goal is to make visible the 'complexities and difficulties,' in other words give a layered, complex view of the human experience (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 748). This is in contrast with the empirical method looking for commonality. It seeks to be 'used' rather than 'analyzed,' 'told' instead of 'theorized,' provide lessons for 'conversation' rather than 'undebatable conclusions,' and substitute 'intimate detail' for 'abstracted facts' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744). In the mingling of the experiences of the researcher and those studies 'inquiry and knowledge is moved further along (Wall 2006, 3).

It can be argued that autoethnography, rising out of memories, which can be 'fragmentary, elusive, and sometimes 'altered' by experience,' can be more powerful when presented, not sequentially, but with themes juxtaposed (Muncey 2005, 1). Regardless of method, the 'iterative nature of any research is a messy business.' (Muncey 2005, 3)

2.6 Analytic and evocative autoethnography

It should be noted that one of the primary discussions of autoethnography from within is a methodological debate between analytic autoethnography and evocative autoethnography. Evocative autoethnography has sought, out of post-modern sensibilities, to move towards a methodology with a different set of goals and 'criteria' than historical ethnographic conventions. Anderson believes that this effort is not

entirely necessary, at least not in a number of cases, and suggests a research methodology he calls 'analytic autoethnography' which has five features: complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher's self, dialogue with informants beyond the self, and commitment to theoretical analysis. He believes that this model should contribute to 'developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena' (Anderson 2006, 373, 378). He believes that evocative autoethnography carries the unintended consequence of 'obscuring the ways in which [autoethnography] may fit productively in other traditions of social inquiry' (Anderson 2006, 374). He believes there has been an 'autoethnographic element in qualitative sociological research' nearly from the beginning, and along with a primary benefit of the insider view, analytic autoethnography allows the research to pursue 'the connections that are between biography and social structure (Anderson 2006, 375, 389-390). Chang (2008, 56-57) concurs when he says, 'when a personally meaningful topic is chosen and investigation is contextualized appropriately in the sociocultural context of the researcher, autoethnography can be powerful.'

The differences between evocative and analytic autoethnography appear sharp and centre on issues of purpose and analysis. And the issue of purpose is divided by an emphasis on the reader as opposed to an emphasis on theory development and even challenges the term evocative autoethnography suggesting that autoethnography by its very definition, design, and purpose is evocative. The two styles are further divided over which is privileged, story or abstract analysis (Ellis and Bochner 2006, 435, 435-438). In disputing the analytic model Ellis and Bochner (2006, 439) suggest that the categories of 'theory,' 'analysis,' and 'generalisation' are to be treated as constructed not natural.

Is it possible that good analysis can be evocative (Ellis and Bochner 2006, 443)? Denzin (2006, 421) reminds us that both can share in the goal of understanding a social setting or group. But some feel that the model Anderson proposes, while having a number of inviting features, also imposes unnecessary ‘constraints’ particularly in the requirement of dialogue with informants beyond self which suggests the undependability of individual, introspective data. Vryan believes that there is significant data, which is personal, that cannot be obtained by any other method and does not need outside collaboration to have veracity. His point is that self-produced data can still be analyzed effectively and bear upon social processes. In short, there is no ‘incompatibility’ between evocative texts and analysis (Vryan 2006, 405-409). Ellis and others actually reject ‘traditional realist and analytic ethnographic epistemological assumptions’ and believe that the ‘integrity’ of evocative autoethnography is violated by ‘framing it in terms of conventional sociological analysis’ (Anderson 2006, 377). Perhaps it is insightful to consider Burnier (2006, 414) coming from the discipline of political science where autoethnography is virtually absent, when she says that autoethnography allows her to write both evocatively and analytically.

In the shadow of the traits of analytic autoethnography Patton cites Richardson’s five traits of evocative autoethnography: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, impact, and expression of a reality. Richardson calls these ‘high and difficult standards; mere novelty does not suffice’ (Richardson 2000a, 254 cited in Patton 2002, 87; Richardson 2000c, 937). Kusenbach, in reviewing Kathleen Gilbert’s book on *The Emotional Nature of Qualitative Research* says that for Gilbert the role of emotions invites us to a personal knowledge that ‘will make us better scientists’ as well as result in

a more truthful output (Gilbert 2001 cited in Kusenbach 2002, 1). It is impossible to remove the passion and commitment of the observer whose qualities are essential to experiencing and investigating the world (Polanyi 1958).

2.7 Criticisms of autoethnography

Not surprisingly with a relative new extension of ethnography there are critics and criticisms. It is not uncommon for some to consider autoethnography ‘irreverent, self-absorbed, sentimental, and romantic’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 736). Or as Sparkes (2000, 22) decries, ‘The emergence of autoethnography and narratives of self. . .has not been trouble-free, and their status as proper research remains problematic.’

A number of issues form the core of the criticism of autoethnography and similar narrative forms. One arises from the question, ‘What kind of truth do these stories aspire to?’ It is said that stories give life a structure it does not have, thus fictionalising life. Along with that, the basis of narratives, namely the experiences of a person are sometimes cloudy and uncertain and so are never complete. Memories can be selective and distorted and mediated by language (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 745). Further, ‘expert knowledge is socially sanctioned in a way that commonsense or personal knowledge is not’ (Wall 2006, 8). This along with the knowledge of how the knowledge is produced as well as who does it, impacts the ‘status’ that is assigned (Muncey 2005 cited in Wall 2006, 8)). Morse (2000, 1159 cited in Etherington 2004, 141) worries about the ethical issues not the least of which is that autoethnography involves not only the stories and feeling of the author but others within the ‘native culture;’ and how are these people to respond? Was permission granted, withdrawal offered, a review of the product invited?

In answer, stories show that the meanings and significance is incomplete and can be revised according to our present. Stories do risk distortion, rearrangement and omission. They can be wrong in tone or detail. However, this is not a threat to the narrative truth because the narrative is ‘not a neutral attempt to mirror facts.’ It is not trying to ‘recover’ meanings but give meanings today. One cannot judge a narrative ‘against the meaning of events themselves because the meaning of pre-narrative experience is constructed in its narrative expression’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 745-746).

A second criticism suggests that the personal narrative advances a ‘romantic construction of self.’ Atkinson goes on to argue that if you are a storyteller and not an analyzer then the goal is therapeutic rather than analytic. This view posits that we should question privileged status of the narrative data while also inferring that there should not be any similar suspicion about the ‘standard version of representational social science’ (Atkinson, 1997 cited in Ellis and Bochner 2000 745). The suggestion is that there is a lack of ‘systematicity and methodological rigor’ (Wall 2006, 8). In answer, not only is the self indistinguishable from the life story it constructs, the view that if it does not produce theory it cannot be science is a ‘trashing of emotion’ (Tompkins, 1989). And a text that among other functions helps self-discovery and self-creation for author or reader ‘can be threatening only under the most narrow definition of social inquiry.’ We need to question our assumptions if anything with personal value is automatically considered non-academic (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 745-746). The response of Laslett (1999, 391 cited by Wall 2006, 9) is that the autobiographical method actually provides a fuller picture. And Bochner (2001 cited in Wall 2006, 9) objects to the idea that a focus on self is automatically presenting a ‘decontextualized reality.’ Never the less ‘precautions in

interpreting, generalising, and eliminating bias' are the same with autoethnography as with any research (Ellis 1991, 30 cited in Wall 2006, 8). Bochner (2000, 266) suggests that ultimately both empiricists and interpretivists agree that 'inevitably they make choices about what is good, what is useful, and what is not. The difference is that one side believes that "objective" methods and procedures can be applied to determine the choices we make, whereas the other side believes these choices are ultimately and inextricably tied to our values and our subjectivities.' And while there is, to some degree at least, a different type of standard for credibility, rigour, and validity there are additional literary standards of 'coherence, verisimilitude, and interest' (Richardson 2000b, 11 cited in Wall 2006, 9).

A third criticism is that such a culture of confession seems to promote a victimization mentality. However, most 'illness narratives' show that it is used as a 'source of empowerment' and even a form of resistance. It suggests that there is 'agency through testimony' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 749).

Fourth, some may ask how do we know our representations are accurate and we can generalise? But here is perhaps the most important shift in thinking. It suggests that 'the negotiation and performance of acts of meaning should become our model for how we tell about the empirical world' (Ellis and Bochner 2000 748).

Further, a fifth criticism is that the insider posture blurs relationships between the researcher and the researched. But, is not one of the strengths of the insider an awareness of the history behind the research questions? It is true that the insider's perspective does not necessarily reflect the interpretation of events and people of every individual in the group and the insider, due to familiarity, may not see taken-for-granted assumptions

(Muncey 2010, 33). So the greater the visibility of the author, the better to assess such issues as those mentioned in this paragraph.

In the end, narrative is about transformation, communication, and incarnation. Autoethnographic accounts can suffer by too much focus on writing style without sufficient reflection and analysis, lack of self-honesty about motivation for doing research, failure to build a bridge between personal experience and theory, and an inability to give answers to 'reasoned critique' (Duncan 2004, 11).

2.8 How is autoethnography done? Standards and conventions

Within a research context the author of an autoethnographic piece must decide where along the continuum of art and sciences he wants to be located, or what claims are being made. If the work is closer to art then the writer is not primarily focused on facts but on the meanings attached to experiences. If however, it is representational then it may be best to have 'multiple sources and levels of story recorded at different times' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 750-751). Autoethnography will often have a more obvious analytic purpose and frame among social scientists but analysis can come through story, 'thinking with the story not just about it' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 753). The autoethnography can move between narrative and categorical knowledge but is best written from what the writer remembers actually happening which assists in giving meaning (Ellis and Bochner 2000 753, 757).

A typical autoethnography will start with systematic sociological introspection, namely, the author's personal life, constructed by paying attention to physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 737). As the writer constructs the

narrative, sometimes using emotional recall, he or she will move in and out between the personal and the cultural (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 752-753). We interpret events of the past from our current position, or 'retrospective field notes' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 751-752). Bakhtin suggests that stories 'are the means by which values are made coherent in particular situations' (Holquist 2002, 37 cited in Muncey 2010, 34).

We will never perfectly capture experience. And narrative will be selective, from a point of view, and for a purpose (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 750). Typical criteria for validity, reliability and generalisability do not fit. Rather than typical validity, does the work seem believable, possible, or life-like, in short, is there verisimilitude (Bruner 1990)? While there is not 'orthodox reliability' because the narrative is created from situated location there can be reliability checks. While our lives are 'particular' so generalisability may seem not to apply, our lives are also typical and we can search for that uniqueness and commonness (Ellis and Bochner 2000 751). So a story is judged like other stories, on its 'honesty, visibility and the authenticity' of the author in tension, movement, enabling the reader to understand and feel what the experience conveys, a the balance of 'rigor and imagination' (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 749). Etherington (2004, 147) suggests 'autoethnography and other post-modern texts 'trouble' familiar rules for judging the quality of research.'

2.9 How autoethnography serves the goals of my research

Bochner explains that he was motivated to look in the direction of narrative inquiry by an unsettledness with what was the received conventions. He sought a more 'collaborative and interactive' relationship between author/researcher and reader/subject.

The three arenas that stood out were how human experience is ‘endowed with meaning,’ the moral and ethical choices faced, and the conventions that constrain what is told and how it is told and how people resist those constraints (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 743-744). But how did I arrive at this method, believing it would be a ‘best way to gain knowledge’ of the world or culture I am studying (Smith, 2005, 2,3)? It seemed true to me that the ‘method I used was as important. . .[as] the story I had to tell’ (Muncey 2005, 2).

My choice of autoethnography is birthed by two convictions, one, that empowerment is a human experience and it cannot be fully comprehended without a model of discourse that expresses the humanness of the idea and that the experience is, in fact, ‘endowed with meaning,’ and secondly that the drive to comprehend this reality rises from my own awareness of the potentiality of empowerment and the personal experience of that potentiality, both intentionally and unintentionally, being stripped from me while I was in a state of being unaware of what was happening, or how to respond or rectify the emerging reality when I did understand it. My personal experience is a negative and then positive case in disempowerment and empowerment in home, church, and work. So I began to look for a ‘participatory paradigm’ to give voice to my experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 cited in Smith 2005, 3). I concluded, that it was a necessary method to address my research questions (Duncan 2004, 2). Interestingly, Reed-Danahay states that, ‘the most cogent aspect to the study of autoethnography is that of the cultural displacement or situation of exile characteristic of the themes expressed by autoethnographers’ (Reed-Danahay 1997, 4 cited in Brunier 2006, 412). Muncey (2010, 10) reminds us that the story will emerge ‘out of the juxtaposition of your own experience and outside influences, and the interaction between the two,’ and that the

‘desire to write derives from the disjunctions that occur between one’s own experience and the official narratives set out to explain it.’

I believe my experience, in type, is similar to others and therefore has human usefulness. I want to give evidence. It is true that my experience has a narrow source, and can easily represent a marred re-creation of history. But it is my belief that the visceral impact remains and has impacted my understanding of the world, my world, and my ability to respond to both worlds. In the end I could not imagine leaving out or ignoring my personal experience for I believe my experience can play a valid role in producing valid data (Smith, 2005, 3,4). By using autoethnography I could ‘inject my own interpretations of my experience’ (Smith 2005, 4).

By sharing graphic representations of my perceived life experiences and the culture I was part of and in which the events and perceptions occurred I hope to give voice to the value of empowerment, the intrinsic yearnings of humans, and show in practical terms how choices impact choices. My personal narratives address qualities of empowerment, as well as the research questions. If something is real it should be able to be experienced just as we ‘feel’ the impact of wind and gravity. And the lived experience reveals the author’s identity as it evolves and is displayed (Bruner, 1990 cited in Ellis and Bochner 2000, 745). The ‘research text,’ largely free of academic jargon and abstracted theory is the story (Ellis and Bochner 2000,745).

Ultimately these personal stories cannot stand on their own as the end product of research. They are given to ‘compliment’ and ‘enrich’ the data (Smith, 2005, 4). The literature search and three case studies form the core of this research endeavor. The autoethnographies illustrate and add layers to the material as well as invite the reader into

very human process of 'breaking out' of a received identity and purpose and 'breaking in' to a personally chosen and integral identity. As such they become the incarnational realities of an academic work, the difference between the act of proposing to someone to marry and the dimensions of love one feels in one's heart for the other. But at the end of the day, as a researcher, I could not come to the final page of my research and find 'my story conspicuously absent' (Muncey 2005, 2).

For my purposes, aligned in accord with the four traits of empowerment identified in chapter one and the research questions, a 'system of keeping my reflections' through a journal was chosen. This journal would track and analyse not only my reflections as they relate to the above empowerment traits and questions, but would include the cultural realities and the context in which they arose. The journal would include reflections on personal values, cultural identity and membership, and initial analysis (Chang 2008, 95). It was important that research protocol be explicit (Duncan 2004, 12). I organised my data in accordance with the following guidelines: using a journal, the empowerment traits and the research questions I wrote of the research settings in which personal experience occurred, leaving room for reflection and the emergence of tacit knowledge, reviewing the writing for themes and issues present in the research from other sources, using analysis complementary to the case study analysis, adding interviews from the original settings/cultures and revising the narratives as the steps above surfaced new and relevant data (Duncan 2004, 11). This 'systematic self-observation' gives access to 'covert, elusive, and/or personal experiences like cognitive processes, emotions, motives, concealed actions, omitted actions, and socially restricted activities as well as having the

potential to make visible what was taken-for-granted as an insider (Rodriguez and Ryave 2002, 3-4 cited in Chang 2008, 91).

Therefore I organised a series of interviews with people who were insiders or members of the various cultures my journal reflections touched on. As well I used a culture-gram to expose my memberships, relationships, roles, and 'primary identifiers' (Chang 2008, 98). These steps were designed, in part, to generate reliability through creating a protocol others could follow.

With the backdrop that analysis is identifying the essential features and that systematic description of interrelationships and interpretation is finding the cultural meanings beyond data (Wolcott 1994, 12 cited in Chang 2008, 127), I used a number of strategies including noting recurring and cultural themes, exceptional occurrences, issues of inclusion and omission, connecting the past with the present, the relationship of self and others, and reflecting on theories or explanations (Chang 2008, 132-137).

Autoethnographic writing is viewed as 'active, constructive, interpretative, reconstructive' and not simply the end of a process (Chang 2008, 140-141). There is a wide selection of writing styles within the autoethnographic tradition. I will be using features of one of Lightfoot's narrative types called the progressive where the central character undergoes transformations involved in coherence and integration (Lightfoot 2004, 27 cited in Chang 2008, 142-143). My intent will be to write in the confessional-emotive style where the author is self-revealing, and the analytic-interpretive that balances description with analysis (Chang 2008, 143-147, 149). The first, because this research method is being chosen to contribute to an overall research goal of providing insight into the cultural issues of how organisations sustain empowering cultures, and the

second, because empowerment functions fundamentally through the perceptions of the individual and how they experience atmosphere, people, and events.

2.10 Evaluation

Finally, in connection with the above protocols and research methodology Duncan (2004, 8-11) provides a model for judging the quality of an autoethnography that seems both useful and appropriate. He highlights six features that deserve to be addressed if the author of the autoethnography wants the academic and scholarly community to consider the findings. Duncan believes that attention to study boundaries, instrumental utility, construct validity, external validity, reliability, and scholarship will provide a framework for evaluation.

Study boundaries include items like time, location, and point of view. My autoethnography covers my life from approximately twelve until fifty-three years of age. It reflects on four relational settings, namely, me in my immediate and extended family of origin, and in my church from childhood through college, and then as a leader in the local church as lead pastor and as conference superintendent and executive in the church denomination. The autoethnography covers the relational and cultural realities, the empowering and disempowering elements, and my interaction with those features as they rested in other people and in culture. In all four settings I can be viewed as a member and in the first two as person without status and in the last two a leader and with influence.

Eisner (1991, 58 cited in Duncan 2004, 9) speaking of instrumental utility suggests that the usefulness of the method rests in part on its ability to surface data and analysis that is useful to a broader audience. He cites three values. The first is to bring

clarity to an enigmatic situation. Another value is that through the study reports, the unique features of one setting may give rise to predictions about features that might be present in other settings. Finally, the study is useful if the results can act as a guide to 'highlight particular aspects of a situation that might otherwise go unnoticed.' I believe my autoethnography illustrates each of these by addressing the puzzlement over why highly intentional organisations seem to regularly under perform when trying to sustain an empowering culture, by suggesting what elements seem compatible in given settings with the intention of sustaining an empowering culture, and finally by bringing to light the software issues that seem to have remained relatively invisible in the efforts to sustain empowering cultures.

Are the operational measures correct for the concepts being studied? These are the concerns of construct validity. I am using three ways to substantiate this piece of research, first by using multiple sources, second by recording data in a way that can show a traceable pattern, and third, by having the narrative accounts reviewed by two other people that were part of the culture I am describing and who know me.

External validity does not lay in the facts of the autoethnography being a representative example but rather the 'strength of the themes and theories contained in the study's findings and how they might apply to other situations' (Duncan 2004, 10). This autoethnography shows, both in narrative and analysis that there are particular and invisible elements of constructed culture that generate a view of reality that stifles the primary elements of empowerment. It also suggests that the settings in which this condition existed, in many respects, is neither unique to the author nor to the culture at large. It identified and described features that might be identifiable in other settings. It

exposed certain cultural restraints that impact the good intentions of those endeavouring to generate and sustain empowering culture, and it highlighted principles around the issue of empowerment that may be relevant elsewhere.

As relayed in a previous paragraph in this section, and reflecting on issues of reliability, a detailed protocol for the research design of the autoethnography was developed, followed, and documented. It included the research goals, developing reflections, writing a preliminary retrospective account, keeping a reflective journal, using interviews as part of multiple sources, a final draft that showed the on-going activity not only of layered reflection but analysis and interpretation, a review of others of the same bounded period, and a revision that encapsulated the reviewers insights when appropriate.

I chose autoethnography not for creative writing but because it allowed me to discover and use tacit understandings as a life-long participant in particular cultures. The narrative includes confessional aspects but moves beyond that to show deeper reflection and analysis and connects my personal account to broader themes and data, in short to reflect a scholarly account.

2.11 Summary

There has been a shift in the way research in the social sciences is conducted. The self as researcher has moved from being invisible to visible. The reasons are multiple but they have coalesced in creating a crisis of confidence in the social sciences. Yet, the activities connected to reflexivity have been a central part of the ethnographic repertoire for years.

Personal narrative has developed as one research option in this new era. In some cases this option broadens the purpose of research and in others the purpose is changed. There is both the analytic and the evocative. The analytic retains elements of traditional qualitative sociological research methodology while the evocative changes, among other things, the audience. Within this tradition is autoethnography, a methodology which makes the researcher a topic of investigation with personal reflection as a core function of the research process. It is possible to incorporate both analytic and evocative.

Criticisms centre on self-centredness, creating fictionalized accounts, and ethics. But it is suggested that there is something wrong with research assumptions that automatically labels anything personal as non-academic. Narrative methodology can involve ‘reasoned critique.’

The writing is based on personal life, like retrospective field notes. The vignettes must be believable, with a process that shows reliability checks.

This method fits my research goal because empowerment, whether positive or negative, is a human experience and I will be able to show the incarnational realities of empowerment. And second, my drive to understand this social phenomenon arises from my personal conviction of the potentialities of empowerment developed from my personal experience of being deprived of that reality sometimes intentionally, but often, unintentionally. To do this I will use analytic-interpretive and confessional-evocative writing to show description, analysis and self-revelation. This happens with a sense of self that is communal and shows the interaction between self and culture.

However, the autoethnography will be used to compliment and enrich rather than form the foundation for this research. Nevertheless, though the methodology of

autoethnography may sound artistic rather than analytic, it follows clear academic protocols and standards.

CHAPTER THREE
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY WITH A LITERATURE REVIEW
OF EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Introduction to the chapter structure

This chapter is intended to communicate how my interest in empowerment and the social structures it lives in developed, and how the topics that my life experience surfaced have been dealt with in the literature and what avenues for research seem worthwhile.

Since the topic grew out of my personal experiences I will be using auto-ethnography to highlight the motivations and issues. An extension of my personal history, having been raised on a farm, and thus having a ‘deep understanding’ or ‘profound knowledge’ of that reality, has been to develop a farm metaphor through which to sift the data of the literature review. The review and autoethnographic pieces are wedded thematically through the form of the metaphor.

I have also developed six perspectives out of which empowerment literature from organisational theory and management is written. Further, there is a brief historical sketch of the development of the two primary strands of empowerment literature and the reasons for my choice of one. The review will be primarily from the perspective of the United States with historical facts in the common domain.

3.2 Historical overview of empowerment

In the 1930s America endured the Great Depression. It dramatically impacted the nation's confidence in itself and its future. Since its inception there have been two internal events that shaped the nation like no others. The first was the Civil War. Prior to the Civil War the United States saw itself as an affiliation of states. After the war it was a nation. The Great Depression struck at the heart of the national optimism and 'city on a hill' self-image that America carried.

In the 1940s WWII broke out and the American Industrial machine was at its best. As an example, though America tanks were not as durable as German Panzer divisions, the United States so out produced Germany that they could not keep up. This overwhelming industrial power and the fact that the War was not fought on its soil left the country with a profound and strategic industrial advantage.

However, the insecurity of a generation who had experienced The Great Depression produced a priority on secure jobs. The worker was viewed as a cog in the wheel of commerce and for the most part the worker was content to be seen as such. 'Taylorism' with its focus on efficient job designs, was accepted, in the name of efficiency and thus profitability and security.

But something else was happening. The GI Bill had effects on the nation, perhaps beyond what could have been anticipated. Home ownership soared and college education became common, and economic prosperity returned. These improving social and economic conditions activated a higher level of needs. The 1940s and 1950s gave way to the 1960s and 1970s and great unrest and turmoil. Ultimately, out of this movement came a literature of empowerment. It was advocacy based and generally focused on the

disadvantaged, the poor, developing countries, feminism, and social work. It dealt with meta-structures like governments, national and global economies. Its primary focus was freeing the individual from the oppression he or she was under, usually with an ultimate goal of changing the structures that were the cause of much of the oppression (Adams 2003; Rowlands 1997). Quietly, but just as profoundly, within organisations and business, workers began to question the 'cog in the machine' view. Three books came out that dramatically shifted the discussions of business and organisations. The authors, Deming, Likert, and McGregor spoke of a business world where people mattered as people. Deming, the father of Total Quality Management (TQM) perfected his model in Japan, who then began to challenge the industrial might of the United States perhaps most obviously in automobile production. Many of his 'fourteen points' reflected a new appreciation for worker conditions like 'banish fear' (Deming 1982). Likert is probably least well known of the three but his book spoke of people as assets to be cultivated and he even tried to find an equation so companies could show their human assets on the books (Likert 1961). The third, McGregor, taught at MIT. He did not write widely, but his book, *The Human Side of Enterprise* was significant (McGregor 1960). The title suggests the theme. Though they did not use the term their impact on modern day empowerment theories is obvious.

There was a noticeable difference between how organisational theory/management and 'disadvantaged' streams related to empowerment. The one focused on advocacy, the other efficiency and effectiveness. Then there was the difference in focus between meta-structures like economies and cultures, and more localized organisational structure. Both

tracks deal with structures and people, but the emphasis is different and the structures are different.

Also noted is the organisational/business emphasis that focuses on a psychological construct while the advocacy participants work with socio-political constructs.

O'Conner, writing about Ordway Tead, implores the reader to choose the political construct of empowerment with its emphasis on justice and other elements over the narrower and western psychological construct with its emphasis on personal enrichment and organisational success (O'Conner 2001, 31).

For the purposes of my study I am not primarily concerned with the meta-structures but with the social milieu of an individual organisation and how people within those structures find meaning and are empowered or disempowered. Thus my research, while touching occasionally on the advocacy stream, will primarily engage organisations.

3.3 Description of the six perspectives of empowerment literature

The more recent literature falls roughly into six categories representing six perspectives of the authors' view empowerment.

The first is the 'if it's not broken don't fix it' perspective. These writers do not see empowerment as a significant organisational tool. They view the organisation and management tools presently available adequate to deal with the needs of the organisation. Perhaps the 'father of modern management' Peter Ducker falls into this category (Drucker 1985; 1986; 1989). A look at a number of his books shows not one reference to empowerment. In an interview covering many topics he was asked about empowerment and he said that he despised the word and preferred the word responsibility (Galagan

1998, 27). The answer revealed the level of confusion about what is meant when speaking of empowerment. Argyris, for example, would consider responsibility a core aspect of empowerment (Argyris 1998). Again, Gower's large *Handbook of Management* does not mention empowerment (Lock 1992).

The second and on the far end towards the other direction are the 'new world' writers. This group uses a different set of terms. They feel that the world has changed so dramatically that an entirely new way of looking at reality is required and that new insights in philosophy, language, and cognitive and physical sciences like quantum physics are the places to look. Senge, Scharmer, and Jaworski represent this field (Flowers, et.al. 2005). They are speaking of many of the same themes but are suggesting very different routes of application.

Then there are four perspectives that are speaking the same language and engaged in a debate. The first are the 'practitioners.' They are concerned with techniques, with what works, and do not spend much time looking underneath to see whether things are in harmony (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994). The second in this group are 'the committed.' They have been waiting for something fresh, a new perspective that meets the needs of people and organisations in a rapidly changing world and they are committed to this theme and process as a key to competitive success and personal meaning (Byham 1991; Kanter 1983). The third group of writers are 'the debunkers.' They see empowerment negatively as another fad, an incomplete idea, or a proven failure (Grey 2005). They believe the cost is too high, the effort too great, the results too undependable, and the goal too vague, to make significant use of empowerment models.

The fourth group is ‘the synthesizers.’ Empowerment is a piece that can be adapted into present structures and efforts to improve organisations (van der Eslt, et.al. 2003).

3.4 Description of the farming metaphor as an evaluative tool

I have devised a tool for the analysis of data in the literature review and the autoethnography that uses a farming metaphor to see the component parts of empowerment and their connecting links. I grew up on a wheat farm. Nearly every one I knew either farmed or was in commerce that depended upon farmer’s business.

There are four aspects to farming, the soil, the seed, the process, and the product. Outside this four-part construct acting upon it and being acted upon by it, is the farmer. Outside this system are two constant variables acting upon the system but not being acted upon; these are weather and markets. All farming depends on weather. Some might argue that a farmer impacts the markets but no individual farmer directly impacts them. World economies, global weather patterns, political situations, and governments affect the markets. So weather and markets act upon but are not acted upon by the system.

Each of the four aspects has constants and variables. The soil represents the social context, the structures and relationships of an organisation. A farmer, looking at land he wished to buy said that it would take him two years to get it into shape for planting (Robert Erickson pers. comm.). This would involve tilling, leveling, rock picking, spraying, and fertilizing. The social is the social place people function in. It contains pre-conditions as well as potential conditions. The seed is the person or people. It is planted on the hope of multiplication. It carries life. It changes, and has properties and traits. It can be improved. It acts independently, dependently, and interdependently

within the process. Processes are the activities of the farmer who tills, clears, plants, fertilizes, sprays, cuts, and sells grain. The processes involve techniques. And these techniques are basic but also ever changing. Today, for example, grain is planted by drills that blow rather than till the seed into the soil. Finally, but most importantly there is the product. All the rest is done for this. ‘How many bushels to an acre are you getting?’ farmers ask at grain elevators all over the United States. Along with the amount is the quality, the protein count. Another part of product is the selling. Years ago, a farmer took his grain from the field in the truck to the elevator. Now, profitability is as much when and how you sell, as it is how much you have.

Acting throughout this entire process is the farmer. In the model he is the leader. He acts on and is acted upon by this process. He has power, but the process has an inner integrity he cannot violate. He cannot plant corn too far north because the growing season is not long enough so it will not matter how hard he tries. He will not be successful.

So there are six parts, the farmer/leader, the soil/social milieu, the seed/person, processes/processes, product/intended outcomes, and constant variables that are uncontrollable. But this model operates at three levels. The first is mechanistic. The farmer works through fundamentally the same processes every year. Most farmers have a specific date that they set as a goal for being in the field in the spring. However, there is a dynamic level. Every aspect has constants and variables and as these shift things like sequence, are impacted. Third, there is an organic level. This is the level of inner integrity. At this level things like mystery, meaning, and rhythms operate. How can a

single hard kernel be placed in dry cold ground, die, and eventually produce twenty kernels? This is a mystery. These principles call out for harmony.

All metaphors break down when stretched too far. This one breaks down at the level of type. The farmer is never going to be the seed or vice versa. However, at least for the purpose of this analysis, I believe it is valid at the level of function.

3.5 Autoethnographic narrative and literature review

The following sections using the farming metaphor will explore autoethnographic realities accompanied by literature review. In the title of each section are two items one representing organisational realities and the other farm reality. So for example processes and processes denotes that both organizations and farming have processes that are part of that enterprise.

3.5.1 Autoethnography and literature review: definitions and product

There are phone calls and then there are phone calls. When the phone rings in the middle of the night, there is usually a sense of panic somewhere deep inside. I made my call from a hotel room in Fargo, North Dakota. I had checked in to a Super 8, having traveled back towards home from Minneapolis, Minnesota from a meeting. I called home but got a strange voice. A woman who was a friend of my wife's said I needed to call her husband before I talked to Marcy. Now I was feeling panic. But there was more to come. Gery told me Marcy came to his office weeping and told him that she had just come from the doctor's office. For sometime my wife had had a bad back but a lot of people do. But she had made an appointment and casually mentioned she had a numb

spot on the back of her leg. The doctor said it was probably nothing but they should do an MRI the next day. What they found was a large tumor inside the protective sack that surrounds the spinal cord, pressing against the spinal cord and shutting off the nerves to her leg, thus the numbness. Immediate surgery was essential. Cancer. . .they didn't know until they took it out. Serious, a fifty percent chance of not walking again. I checked out of the hotel I had just checked into and started the eight-hour drive through the night to Billings, Montana, surely the longest drive of my life.

This is a story about 'first things,' how we lose them and how we find them. We usually lose them innocently. They get misplaced among the debris of our lives. But then something, like an electric shock awakens us to what is at risk. First things are those fundamental things that I know in my heart are valuable. They are of the first order. When my brother's son was born he had a heart defect. Flown to one of the top children's hospitals in the nation, they asked the doctor what their baby's chances were. The doctor said he didn't know because most babies with this problem didn't last long enough to get to the hospital. First things.

My wife's surgery was intended to last four hours but went five, then six, then seven, and eight, and finally word. Just about done. Eight and a half hours. The tumor was wrapped around the nerves. There was scrapping and cutting, and not even the doctor was sure how much damage he had done. His first words to Marcy when she awoke was, 'Mrs. Long can you move your feet?' She did. We were relieved, but uncertainty still lurked. There were twenty-three radiation treatments and her bladder was not working right.

I recall another phone call over a month later. I was at another meeting. Marcy said gleefully, 'I went to the bathroom.'

Though life had been a breeze for about fifteen years, within twenty-four months I had resigned as conference superintendent and decided to serve a sick church I hoped I could bring back to health. The intervening months were filled with many thoughts about first things and I realized I wanted to give the remaining years of my life to first things, and though others thought I was doing great, I knew that I had been coasting. I'm fifty five. I don't want my tombstone to read, 'He was interesting.'

Farmers understand first things. They know farming isn't about soil or seed or new machinery, but rather the harvest. I always hated harvest. It is the hottest time of the year, and dusty, with long hours. But real farmers live for it. When farmers stand around the grain elevators at harvest time they don't ask if someone got his fence fixed. They ask things like what was your protein and how many bushels to the acre did you get on that field over east. No farmer, when asked about his yield would say that he didn't get around to cutting this year because he had some fence to fix.

For me, after a lifetime of activity I have started asking, 'What is the product?' It may well be that empowerment has less to do with productivity, and bottom lines than about 'what kind of place do we want to be.'

Being wedded to an ambulance driver, or as they are called, EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) can be exciting. My wife comes from a family that likes the edge, the raw. She has a sister who is an operating room nurse and brother who is an EMT, and another who qualified as a police officer.

We were living in eastern Montana. We had gotten up early because our son, Nathan, had to catch a school van to a high school speech meet many miles away. We noticed that it was icy outside, but driving in bad weather is part of the typical life of someone in Montana up next to the Canadian border. Nathan left and we returned to bed. About a half-hour later the phone rang. Much too early for good news. The call was for Marcy, who was on call with the ambulance service. There had been a school bus roll over about twenty-five miles north. Dressed and out the door she went. I got up and sat. The mind tries to make sense of data. Nathan was in a school van not a school bus. However, it is the road they were on, and about where they should be. So, unable to twist my mind to some obvious good conclusion, I worried and waited. And then the call and the voice. It was the voice of our son, 'Hi Dad, this is Nate.' My heart stopped, a sweeter sound I had not heard. He gave a description of the event. Now Nate was of slight build and another young man on the speech team was large, six foot four inches tall and two hundred plus pounds in weight. He was a football player. Nate described the roll over and then how Louie, the football type young man had landed on him. 'Louie was my airbag,' he said.

I was having one of the best golf games of my life. A little par three course was bending to my athletic prowess. Then something peculiar happened. Someone from the clubhouse came out onto the course and said I had a call from my wife. 'What in the world,' I thought. Leaving the course I ran quickly to the phone. 'This could not be good,' I thought and I was right. My wife informed me that the police had arrested our daughter. I thought, 'This can't be accurate.' She had trouble going up to the counter and asking for more ketchup at McDonald's, so shy was she. Shoplifting and Natalie,

like oil and water. But, alas, it was true. She did not continue in a life of crime, this being the only time she was ever in any real trouble. Still at the time it was disorienting.

My organisational journey and my two experiences with my children share something in common. They created a disorienting, incoherent experience, which in all three cases involved a sense of threat.

In any enterprise there are things that are required to sustain the enterprise. A car company must make cars that sell in sufficient numbers to sustain the cost factors of the enterprise. Number of sales is obviously a first thing. For some, there need not be any other 'first things.' But for some, there must be. I worked with a company whose cultural DNA could be described as 'having fun making money.' They had no intention of running an enterprise that could not make money. But they were just as insistent that they were not interested in running a company where people didn't have fun. So for them this was a first thing. 'First things' may be at risk in an organisation, when the organisation has a different set of values from individual members of the organisation. This generates incoherence.

So when an organisation looks around and fails to see something it believes is essential it will feel threat. And there will be an internal lack of coherence. There are 'first things' that are intrinsic to a given industry, but also 'first things' that are intrinsic to a particular organisation. The 'first things' intrinsic to a particular organisation are part of the identity, the self, of the organisation. It is an organisation that says it can't be who it intends and thinks it is without X. This is subjective but real. Starbucks sells coffee and needs to make a profit. However, it intends to be the 'third home' of people, after home and work. This picture is part of its identity and drives many of its decisions.

It can be a coffee company and not be a 'third home' but it can't be Starbucks (Sweet 2007, 11-12). Without that dimension it would experience a lack of coherence.

It may be that empowerment, as a cultural trait must be seen as intrinsic to the organisation's identity in order to be sustainable. It cannot be seen as simply a tool or technique to optimize profits. It feels threatened when aspects of empowerment disappear or grow faint.

Literature Review

From the enormous amount of research that swirls around it, empowerment must be seen as an important concept in organisational life. But definitions and concepts can be varied and even contradictory. Clutterbuck says it is 'almost impossible to gain any kind of rational consensus as to exactly what it is' (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 7). The empowerment concept has acquired a considerable aura but not yet a socially agreed content (Cheater 1999, 18). Gill, who gives an entire chapter to empowerment, says it is 'misunderstood' (Gill 2002, 209). And others suggest the definitions are many and varied leading to confusion (Gill 2002, 214). So empowerment is not a clear-cut concept. For example, Deming, the father of Total Quality Management, speaks of empowerment as nonsense though his writings espouse many of the themes of empowerment (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 11). Quinn tells of an organisation that approved an empowerment strategy and after a year nothing had been done. When twelve senior executives were interviewed about the delay, the interviews revealed that half of them had a mechanistic or hierarchical and delegatory view and half an organic or lateral and fluid view of empowerment (Quinn 1996, 221-225).

A review of thirty-five definitions reveals that they fall into five categories. In some cases a definition will fall into multiple categories. First, some of the definitions, in fact most, are simplistic. By simplistic I mean using common words without context. 'Ability to get something done,' or 'freeing people to take more responsibility,' or 'making the most of people's potential,' and 'setting people free to think for themselves,' are typical definitions of this type (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 12-13; Covey 2004, 272; Gill 2002, 211; James 1999, 16). Such definitions are problematic at a number of levels not the least of which is that they can be made to mean almost anything.

A second category is mechanistic definitions. They describe empowerment as a set of techniques. Bowen says empowerment included five activities: sharing with the front-line, information affecting organisational performance, rewards based on organisational performance, knowledge that enables employees to understand and contribute to organisational performance and decision-making authority (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 16).

Thirdly, almost all the definitions are explicitly or implicitly hierarchical. Something is given. Granted, the word empowerment suggests a transfer of power but it can be seen from either the perspective of the manager/leader or the employee/member's. Managers continue to define empowerment as giving power to make decisions (Randolph 2000, 94-96). Greenberg and Baron call it the passing of authority from management to employee (Gill 2002, 212). There are dissenting voices. Some say power is with people and cannot be handed down. (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 12).

The fourth group includes antagonistic definitions of empowerment implying domination, exploitation, control, and surveillance (Hudson 2001, 469-470). The fifth

group of definitions are more organic. 'An intrinsic task motivation that manifests itself in four cognitions, reflecting an individual's orientation to his work roles: 1) Meaningfulness, 2) competence, 3) impact, and 4) personal choice' (Spreitzer 1996, 484). Conger and Kanungo define empowerment as a process of 'enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through identifying conditions that foster powerlessness and removing by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques those barriers and providing efficacy information' (Conger and Kanungo 1988, 474).

The response to this panoply of definitions is fourfold. Some feel the definitions reveal that empowerment is just a fad, a buzz word for the present (Argyris 1988, 98-99; Pickard 1993, 28-29). But Pickard notes that others believe it is in fact dangerous and should be shed as soon as possible pointing to horror stories of heavy lay-offs and chaotic structural changes (Pickard 1993, 28-33). A third idea is that empowerment is just too difficult to get a hold of. Considering that even well-defined and highly considered management programs like TQM fail at a rate of fifty to ninety percent, the chance of consistent success is not high (Grey 2005, 93). This view is met with the answer that such poor success rates are attributable to other things like lack of management commitment, inadequate preparation or training, or haphazard implementation (Coleman 1996, 29-36). Finally there is a group that feels there are some things that are helpful and the good ideas can be 'cherry picked' (Bushe, Coetzer and Havloic 1996, 36-45).

This lack of consensus about empowerment definitions could suggest a variety of implementation strategies or different management purposes, but it is more likely, since it is a given that there is an 'astonishingly wide currency used in contradictory ways' that it

reflects a lack of 'deep understanding' about the fact that empowerment is a particular way of looking at people and things before it is anything else (Pfeffer 1998, 292-300).

What a farmer is cannot be divorced from the intended product, which is a quality and quantity of grain at as high a price as possible. It may be that the definition of empowerment, if it is to be useful, should be linked with the intended product that must have a direct or indirect link to the final company goals, otherwise, as Wendy James says, 'empowerment is little more than responsibility or delegation from above' (James 1999, 14).

There are numerous positive and negative unintended consequences and positive intended consequences related to ultimate or intended product. The positive consequences fall naturally into personal, group and corporate. The ten common personal traits, though not all ten are the goal of every empowerment initiative are, organisational commitment, social identification, significance, learning, sense of community, work becomes exciting, sense of collective efficacy, increasingly innovative, upward influencing, and job satisfaction (Bryman, Dainty and Andrew 2004, 27-37; Chen, Kark and Shamir 2003, 246-255; Gill 2002, 216-217; Kirkman and Shapiro 2001, 597-617; Kizilos, Nason and Spreitzer 1997, 679-704; Lawton 2004, 104-105; Malone 2003, 166-168; Obeng and Ugboro 2001, 254-255; Quinn 1996, 226; Quinn and Spreitzer 1997 40-41; Rowlands 1997, 15, 111-113). They are all personal, sometimes only about self, at other times about others, and finally about the organisation, but always from a personal stance.

The employer who says they want a certain type of employee is speaking of some or all of these traits. There are far fewer group traits as intended consequences, namely,

trust, team climate, collective efficacy, and communication (Alcover et al. 2005, 213-327; Coleman 1996, 29-31; Gill 2002, 217; Kirkman and Shapiro 2001, 597-716; Lawton 2004, 104-105; Quinn and Spreitzer 1997, 42-44; Rowlands 1997, 15; Thompson 1995, 53-540). Organizational results were higher work productivity, innovation, profits, and customer satisfaction (Bryman, Dainty and Andrew 2004, 27-37; Gill 2002, 217; Kizilos, Nason and Spreitzer 1997, 679-704; Obeng and Ugboro 2000, 250). Layoffs, unexpected structural changes, and work related stress were three unintended consequences, though some argue that layoffs have been part of some company's strategies (James 1999, 17; Kizilos, Nason and Spreitzer 1997, 679-704; Pickard 1993, 28-29).

Most definitions are employee or person centered so it fits that most product is person or employee centered. But the question is whether they are viewed as techniques or fundamental to the values of the organisation. If it is the former, then under pressure empowerment initiatives are at risk.

The data suggests that only occasionally are the traits of person and group considered first things (Covey 2004, 264-265). If they are essential and first things they will be found on the list with productivity, profits, and innovation. Also of possible importance is the fact that other factors like competitive structure, technology, and relationship with customers impact some of the things the traits are said to impact. The data proving a link between the personal traits and things like innovation and profits is very mixed. I must consider whether they are really first or second things and what must be true about an organisation for them to be first things.

Perhaps working backward from whatever a company decides are first things is the best way to discover what 'product' should be. If empowerment goals can become

first things then they will be sustained during times of pressure. Companies do not give up the desire for profits during difficult times, because profit is a first thing in their minds. Are the products of empowerment so thought of?

3.5.2 Autoethnography and literature review: soil and social milieu

I lost my way as a child and have only recently found it. There is an old story about a man, lost at night, in a large and unfamiliar city. Looking for his destination, and frightened, he came upon a garden gate through which light was streaming. From behind the garden walls there was laughter. He hesitatingly entered and was immediately welcome. He had one of the most beautiful nights of his life. He received directions and made his way to his destination. The next morning in daylight he tried to find the garden gate but was unable to do so, never again to see it and the friends he had made. I've always loved that story, perhaps because I could feel the angst of not being home.

I have great parents and was well cared for and loved as a child. But love is always tainted in the human heart so there was debris that filtered into my soul that I was not aware of, debris from those who loved me and debris from the strange interpretations I gave it.

My mother's great drive is image. She always wanted to dress just right, never wanted to be late or embarrassed, liked being up in front with her considerable musical talents, and usually talked the most and loudest at family gatherings. When company was coming she would clean the ceilings, even inside cupboards. Everything must be perfect. Once, when a number of relatives were gathered, two aunts got into a verbal and emotional fight defending their sons, who farmed close to one another. My mom was

very incensed at the one who was actually the most injured, because the lady couldn't maintain her composure and thus threatened my mother's social gathering. My father was a typical farmer. Large hands, strong, with the ability to fix anything. Except for televisions, I never knew my father not to try his hand at anything. Name it, engines, trailers, roofing, carpentry, electrical, whatever. He would look at a machine part and say something nearly prophetic like, 'you know what that's off of, a 1941 Massey-Ferguson combine.' I always wondered, how did he know that?

But my way of seeing reality and the things that interested me seemed far removed from the skills and interests of those around me. At thirteen I was reading the life of Freud and at fifteen an entire almanac, the one with all the statistics. Not only could I not look at a part and tell what it was from, I didn't care. All my peers could look at the taillights of a car going by and speak out the make and model. Amazing. I couldn't fix anything. I once tried to put a kit for a desk together and had so many left over parts we eventually burned the desk.

As a child I had a small plastic briefcase and I would carry around paper and pens. I would never use them, just carry them around. No one I knew was interested in talking about things I was interested in.

Not many years ago, I took my ageing parents out to eat in town. As we sat down my mother pointed out a woman and said that she was in the hospital the same time my mom was in to give birth to me. As the other lady rose to go she stopped by our table and my mother began to talk. What she said I believe she would deny if I told her, because she just wouldn't believe it. As they talked my mom remarked about remembering how

pretty she thought the other lady's baby was and then said, 'And I just had this ugly baby.'

So, I got on stage, to cover my sense of unattractiveness and personal rejection and unmanliness. My mother was highly involved in the church. From childhood I sang, I memorized Bible verses, I was the quizzing champion. To say I understood my motives would be false. I just learned what people liked and did it. I became an excellent public speaker. People liked it and my mom liked it. But I have come to see that it is not me.

I started living a life other people liked but it was not my life. Consider that often if I get good at something, something others enjoy, they not only affirm but even reward me. But with the reward comes a hidden contract that I am accepted and welcomed on the basis of that skill or trait or talent they like. So I focus on it. Yet because it comes so naturally I coast and the impact may widen but there is little depth. And I feared that if I became me I would lose my friends and my future. Hiding and betrayed myself seemed to be the answer. Unaware of what I was doing, I can see it clearly now. I lived someone else's life, learning to hide behind my talents. I learned to hide the things I think about because they didn't fit in the very religiously and socially conservative church which was my personal history. I learned to expect others to take care of me if I did what they wanted. But the more successful I became the more fragmented I felt.

I grew up in a small Midwestern Methodist denomination. The pastors were mostly from the farm, marginal education, and further, suspicious of education and even the outside. Sitting as a young man next to an old veteran of the pastoral life at a church camp meeting, he gripped my arm and warned me, 'Son, don't get too much education.' The denomination was driven by fear. A different vocabulary, a different set of values

that would 'let people in' were signs of spiritual and doctrinal drift. Fear appeared to be the driving response and the mechanism to serve it was control, demanding conformity. Anything personal was often seen as a threat, so sacrifice of any dream, any identity to the 'Kingdom' was viewed as the high point of personal life. In an intense discussion as a teenager at a Bible camp with the main speaker, he spoke with rebuke and asked with a demand, 'Are you willing to give up everything and be a ditch-digger.' I thought later, not even my dad with his limited education would want me to be a ditch digger. Why such a low view of the 'perfect will of God?'

This social milieu generated unrecognized but felt incoherence. I later made a list of my 'heroes' in life and eighteen of twenty were educators, but in my entire life until nearly fifty I was taught unofficially that I would be in bed with the devil to pursue such a career track. Beyond that, in a culture where the unfamiliar and unknown were immediately viewed as a threat, my personal DNA was all about curiosity and exploring. One consultant suggests that people are either explorers, pioneers, or planners. And explorers have great curiosity (Cokins 2011). Obviously the list moving left to right moves from the most unfamiliar to the most familiar. I believe now that I am an explorer, at home with a new idea, a new vista from which to view reality.

I sat in a coffee shop with a man who constantly represented 'the other.' He is a man of reading, education, risk, and the unfamiliar. He asked, 'What do you want?' I was known as someone who read constantly, flirted with new ideas, but at the end of the day always sat in a familiar seat. The sound of the sentence rattled around the room like a bullet in a steel building, finding nowhere to sink in. What was he saying? And me, a

man with an endless list of ideas, could think of not one thing. It was the first time I can remember, that someone gave me 'permission' to be 'other.'

Then I did something I wanted to do. I resigned my job as superintendent and moved to Portland, Oregon to help a hurting church and tried at that church to be me. It was difficult because I didn't know me very well. And everything I feared happened. I lost my friends; people who thought they knew what they were getting with me, resented me. I finally left, rejected and dejected. Yet pleased to have finally met me. I am working my way back to me now and part of it includes education. The most admired people in my life have always been educators. I just didn't pay attention. Three times I started further education and each time stopped because someone had something else they wanted me to do. I learned through that experience that when a person starts on a new quest there are often five groups of people. Some cheer you on and want to go with you. Others cheer you on, as long as you don't require of them that they go. A third group not only does not go but the person they liked is disappearing so they slowly drift away. A fourth group gets mad. They don't like you changing, don't like how it makes them feel, and they resist and either try to pull you back or attack you. Often the people in this group are not the ones you wanted to be here. But a fifth, and previously invisible group, are people who are attracted to this 'new' you, your venture, your journey, your dream, and they unexpectedly begin to show up.

But I puzzle at the impact of the social relations around me and how powerful they were and how blinded I was. Why couldn't I see? Surely this power can be used for good as well. And the incredible energy behind someone significant giving me 'permission' seems inexplicable, that a simple question could change the course of my life.

Literature Review

The soil is the environment in which the seed will either grow and produce or ‘fail to thrive.’ It requires care and preparation before the seed is planted, as well as after the seed is planted. The quality of the soil is a significant precursor of the success of the seed. Farmers love soil. They pick it up, smell it, crumble it in their hands, and kneel down in it. They make the soil their friend.

The data relating to soil or social milieu falls into two categories, relational and structural. They are areas of optimal significance for an empowerment model for they serve as streetlights giving either red or green, stop or go signals. This arena could well serve as the location to test preconditions, structural and relational conditions that need to exist before empowerment models can be adopted. A leader’s job is to set the conditions (Covey 2004, 265).

One man complained that to get anything decided five people had to say yes, but to stop something only one person had to say no (Persico Jr. 1991, 60-61). Structures must follow strategy (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 55-62).

Meanwhile words about the importance of organisational relationships could not be stronger. Wheatley says that organisations are living things and like all living things they organise themselves into systems of relationships that result in increasing capacity (Wheatley 1999, xvi). McGregor in *The Human Side of Enterprise* suggests that to be efficient, an organisation must foster supportive human relationships (McGregor (1960) 1985, x). Likert says that the key management principle is supportive relationships (Likert 1961 103,). This is easier said than done since the United States registers the highest level of individualism among over twenty countries studied and connected with

this are competitive rather than cooperative structures (Hogg and Vaughan 2005, 625). However the emphasis is timely since, for the postmodern generation, relationship is the number one priority (Barna 2005, 43).

The issues of barriers, necessary organisational characteristics, Senge's characteristics of a learning organisation, reasons for resistance, organisational needs, overcoming risk paralysis, all fit into the relational/structural dimensions (Senge 1990).

For example, how does one overcome the fear of risk? By clarifying the organisational constitution (structure) and trust (relationship) (Gill 2002, 225). Or, what are the three primary barriers to empowerment: bureaucratic roadblocks and personal time constraints, which are primarily structural, and embedded conflict that is primarily relationship (Quinn and Spreitzer 1997, 40-42). Or consider the four necessary qualities of an organisation ready for empowerment. They are vision and control that are primarily structural and support and openness that are primarily relational (Quinn 1996, 226). Five qualities that reduce employee anxiety about implementing an empowerment program are role clarification, access to information, a boss with wide control, socio-political support, and a participatory climate. The first three are structural and last two relational (Spreitzer 1996, 485-490).

Structures must be relational and relations must be supported by structure. Imagine structure and relationship like the skeletal and nervous system of the body. The skeletal system is necessary to give form so function can occur but interconnections through the nervous system are necessary so there can be action. Both exist so different parts can work together. If I am going to make a move that has the potential to damage the skeleton I better think again.

Empowerment programs often seem difficult to implement. Like soil, the structures and relationships within an organisation could serve as the ground for preparing preconditions so the seed can prosper. As structures and relationships are massaged to create a different culture, empowerment success rises. However, in the data, there is little evident that structures and relationships are used in this way.

3.5.3 Autoethnography and literature review: seed and person

One day I decided, I didn't have to be happy. A crisis is an event that requires more resources than I have. So we either implode or we go out in search of additional or different resources. There have been three stellar crises in my life, one in my marriage, one in my career, and one in my personal life.

One day my wife responded in anger. I knew instinctively it wasn't the kind that I could humor her out of it. In fact, little did I know that while I lived in a fantasy, thinking we were well, she had had enough. We had been married twelve years with three small children. She was constantly busy with the kids and tired. I had not grown up yet so she had four children. That moment of anger was the beginning of eighteen dark months. For three months I did everything I could, took care of the kids, washed the dishes, whatever it took. Nothing. In fact it was worse instead of better. That's when I decided I didn't have to be happy. I just needed to do the right thing. So for starters I decided that for one year, all 365 days, the last words my wife would hear coming out of my mouth every day, would be words of praise for her, no matter how the day had gone for either of us. And I did it. Marcy went through four stages. The first was indifference. It just didn't matter. As I continued she moved on to anger. 'Fine, where was he when I needed him?' But as I continued, despite her anger, her attitude turned to

curiosity. In fact she says she would do something during the day she knew I didn't like just to see if I would carry through that evening with my words of praise. The last stage was love. When I said to her, 'I love you,' she responded with words I had not heard in months, 'I love you too.'

The second crisis came in my professional life. I was a pastor and was serving a congregation in Circle, Montana. I had been there about five years when I had had enough. Not because things were not going well, but because it just wasn't real. Yet I had a family, and small children and I had to do something. However, more pressing was a sermon on Sunday. I decided I just could not speak about something that was not true for me anymore and, at the time, that ruled out just about everything. I knew one thing, that God loved me. So I decided, though I was known as a great storyteller, that I would simply take people through the little booklet, 'Do you know the steps to peace with God,' with no stories. I also decided to invite people to the front of the church, much like Billy Graham did at the end of his crusades. But this was a conservative German church and they didn't have an altar. So I went through the little booklet, in the middle of it thinking, that this was awful and I couldn't wait to get done and get out. But I had decided to invite people up to the front so I asked people to simply bow their heads and if this little message touched them and they wanted to know they had peace with God to step forward. While I bowed my head I remember thinking, I am almost done. But when I raised my head, to my surprise, there were people at the front of the church from one wall to the other and down the side aisles. I thought to myself, 'Where have I been?' That day I began a search for something more. Wonderful people came into my life who guided me. But it started by saying, 'I have had enough.'

The third crisis I am just coming out of. I went to help a hurting church. With apparently everything going for it, yet slowly dying, it needed fresh vision and caring leadership. I thought I was the one. But after five years I had endured the most difficult professional experience of my life. Nothing I did worked. I used two consultants and numerous change management books. But when I did something just the opposite reaction or result would occur. It was my first 'failure' in twenty years, and it still hurts. After five years I resigned.

But something else happened. It resulted in me deciding to pursue my true love. It generated a desire to be with people. Before, my idea of a perfect vacation was a stack of books under an umbrella on a shore with no people around. Today I want to be with people.

It has left me with questions about why I fall forward in a crisis seeking new resources and others fall back. What contributes to that? Where does our energy to act constructively come from? Interestingly to me, it would appear that in a family and church culture that was very inhibiting in many respects, requiring of me to abandon and be disloyal to much of who I was, I had permission to respond patiently, sacrificially, and with a disposition to look inward for personal improvement and moral growth.

I hated algebra in high school. My teacher had been a science and math teacher for many years. And he knew his math. I was personally tentative, and did not seem to have a high aptitude for math. He viewed questions about 'obvious' things as stupid and would say so, out loud in the class. It happened to me numerous times and I got a C in algebra. Then that teacher left and a new one, just out of college, was hired. He was as tentative as I was, and all of us students found that he loved to be asked questions. So

much so, that we could easily get him off the class plan, derailing him with a constant litany of questions. But for me, I no longer feared humiliation. He taught trigonometry and I got an A. More difficult math, but a safer room. He gave me ‘permission.’

Scharmer tells of doctors in Germany who decided they would get better results if they began to view their patients as collaborators rather than receptors. And so they did treat them differently and got different results. (Kaeufer, Scharmer and Versteegen 2003)

I was walking down a narrow sidewalk in Deal, England with a friend, side by side. It was a crowded market day and people spilled out into the street. My friend walked slowly, directly in a straight line with his hands behind him. But there were so many people that I was behind him, then next to him, then in front of him, down off the curb onto the street and then back up, weaving and zagging. Finally my friend turned and said, “What are you doing?” And I said, ‘I’m trying to get out of the way.’ He said, ‘I noticed.’ It was at his little two-word reply that I pondered, ‘What was I doing?’ It became quickly apparent that there was more going on than just my walking down the sidewalk. I was expressing a life style perspective, that life went better if I stayed out of people’s way as much as possible. But the obvious was immediately true, giving up ‘my space’ I diminished myself, in favour of whoever was around. Staying out of people’s way had at least something to do with giving up personal authority, unrequested capitulation, and self-betrayal, even invisibility. It suggests a view of life lived in reaction rather than intentionality.

In the first set of vignettes about ‘falling forward,’ I was living out the social environment’s permission. In the second, with math, I was living out not having

permission, and in the third, about walking I was abdicating without request, based on previous lessons learned and choices made.

Each of these three environmental stories reveals a ‘different self’ and the self-viewed in a different way, limited, then released, then invisible. So is it possible that how we see ourselves and are seen by others either magnifies or diminishes our ability to respond?

Literature Review

Empowerment is not only about people it is a certain view of people. What do you see when you look at a person, a worker (Pfeffer 1998, 292)? The empowerment literature as it relates to the individual falls naturally into three areas much like the seed in the farming metaphor: what it is, what does it need, and what can it be. The seed has the properties of life. It can grow and reproduce. But agricultural scientists are always working to develop hybrids that can increase the seeds capacity to resist drought. What does a seed need to flourish?

Maslow and others point to the aspiring nature of people. They are capable of intrinsic motivation to be competent, accept responsibility, and can be open to change, even reinventing themselves (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 139-140; Quinn 1996, 134-137). One research piece showed that ninety-three percent of workers were willing to be held responsible for their decisions (Darling 1996, 26-27).

How we treat people impacts how we see them. What do they need to increase capacity? Barriers removed, like lack of training and structural impediments, along with uncertain support of superiors. They need an atmosphere of trust, adequate training, and involvement that brings meaningfulness, competence, impact, and self-determination

(Menon 2001, 155-157). Along with that, shared information, flexible hierarchy, teams and rewards matter.

Continuing Scharmer's story of the discouraged doctors in Germany who, after a year of small group sessions, saw themselves entirely different in relation to their patients, sometimes as mechanic, sometimes an instructor, sometimes, a coach, sometimes, a mid-wife (Kauefer, Scharmer and Versteegen 2003, 5). This power, when the structures allowed it, to reinvent one's self in a particular setting is an example of the dynamic nature of the capacity that people carry. The doctors were given permission to think of themselves and others differently. It was Deming who said people need respect (Persico Jr. 1991, 63-64). A common theme of the literature is an optimistic view of people, but also a very individualistic view.

Secondly, while this view of people is expansionistic, it also presupposes a significant control of environmental factors. The comparison of definition and product showed that by far the largest product result was individual characteristics.

While the ingredients of this category fit nicely into the farming metaphor, it is weak on the interrelatedness with the social environment, being impacted mostly by leadership. For example, safety and trust show up as relational qualities but only trust is a repeated quality in the empowerment literature and usually in reference to leadership (Covey 2004, 161-185).

Thus, at the heart of much empowerment literature is a view of people that is not only optimistic, but optimistic with a particular focus, the malleable capacity of a human being.

3.5.4 Autoethnography and literature review: processes and processes

What do you do with an organisation that's sick? How did it get sick? What can get it well? What does well look like? I went to this church on a mission, a turn-around pastor to help an ailing church that seemed to have everything going for it yet 'failed to thrive.' Location unbeatable, facilities very adequate, staff of ten, funds tight but a multi-million dollar budget. A history of a contentious spirit, but surely there is a way through that. I have never been so wrong about so many things in my life.

I went in with the conviction that people aspire and if allowed to participate in their own renewal they would welcome it. But there were hints of a closed culture. The church had been a blue-collar church in a blue-collar neighborhood but found land and moved into a predominately upscale white-collar community. Like oil and water the two cultures didn't mix. It is often rainy and gloomy in the Northwest. The back wall of the sanctuary had a set of windows that opened up into a glass foyer. But the shades on those back windows were always drawn. It was certainly not conducive for visitors. If they arrived a couple of minutes late they faced a closed door and drawn shades and no idea just what was on the other side. One Sunday I pulled up all the shades and arrived early to watch. After a couple of weeks, the wife of the lay leader, a rather prestigious position, told me she liked the shades up and it felt like her church for the first time in her life.

In the history of the church they had a pastor for thirty-two years that loved them and let a small group of men make all the decisions. Then a new pastor came who was an administrator and he made all the decisions. My predecessor had been a military man and he liked to make decisions but also to personally carry them out. I thought it was

time to give the church back to the people. But the church had a culture of control and fear and I discovered people were not all that eager to have it back. My effort to develop vision groups, consulting groups, and ministry groups, to push decision-making down was actually seen as poor leadership. They were used to being told. And worse, when I wouldn't tell them they got mad. Meanwhile they resented anything I personally initiated even though voluntary. I started some little discipleship workshops and the attacks that came out of that were beyond anything I have ever experienced. It is the most disempowering culture I have ever been in in my life and I found no processes that would bring renewal.

In my five years there the most palpable emotion present was fear. The preconditions relating to structure and relationship were not there. I should have known. Most difficult, I lost the support of my superior who is at heart a peacemaker.

Within the broader organisation mentioned, I was on a significant organizational board. I was the only outsider, all the rest having been part of a common educational experience. One day, I mistakenly remembered the starting time for a daylong meeting, I arrived late, but had a vital meeting I didn't feel I could postpone, so left early. Later, a leader took me aside and mentioned that others wondered at my behaviour of just coming in late and leaving early. I was puzzled at this. The chairman had left early a number of times for medical and other reasons. One member did not show up and while the board was sitting around the table got him on the speaker-phone while he admitted he had forgotten and everyone laughed. Another member repeatedly called in that he could not make it. But me, I was the outsider, so it was apparent that my behaviour was viewed through a different lens than the others who were all insiders.

When about twelve, I went to a Bible camp where I did not know anyone. The first night, as an icebreaker, I suppose, each person was supposed to do something in front of the group. No one was excused. Most of the kids were with others they knew. I was petrified. The fear of humiliation loomed before me, intensifying as the meeting got closer. I pleaded with an adult to no avail. All must participate. I was finally cajoled into singing a little church chorus. I stood in front and sang in a whisper only God could have heard. To this day, it is one of the most mortifying experiences of my life. As an adult I ponder, “What were those adults thinking?” How could they be so blind to the threat to which I was exposed?

Reflecting on the church, the board, and the camp experience I consider that there appear to be at least three internal conditions that unhealthy organisations have in differing mixes and measures. The three are non-challengeableness, non-awareness, and non-normalness. In some organisations the processes are invisibly designed so the organisation or particular people, or values cannot be challenged. Any such ‘threat’ is viewed as an attack. Often the basis of non-challengeability is the past, though it could also be a person. At any rate it sustains the status quo by categorising anyone who challenges or introduces change as rebellious. The non-aware organisation pays no attention to the breakdown between rhetoric and outcomes, and even more, carries on an invisible culture that punishes in blindness. The processes of such a setting are equally untouchable as the non-challengeable setting because of their invisibility. The third trait and organisation is the non-normal, meaning that the people or organisation considers their ways as different than, or above, or deify them in a way that makes them stable and revered and thus added meaning or value is given to these traits.

Each of these three traits has in common inaccessibility, and in an empowering environment, inaccessibility is death, for an empowering culture gives people choice and competency with the expectation that there will be constant renewal and the regular shift from the old wineskin to the new wineskin and such changes will be dispositionally viewed positively. This inaccessibility is a characteristic that can flourish in virtually any social setting, family, church, business, or organisation. It would appear that the greater the inaccessibility the greater the crisis needed to breach that wall.

Beyond this there would appear to be the feature of the privileged voice, characteristic really in any social setting, but enhanced in the ones mentioned above by gate-keeper status, highly restricting access, even to themselves to numerous features of the organisation or enterprise.

Lastly, in regard to the three organisational characteristics, someone trying to get by the gatekeepers was 'labeled.' This labeling, as either rebellious, disloyal, or disrespectful, allowed the organisation to treat the person like a virus, and resist them with a full belief that as gate-keepers they held the high ground. This behaviour would eventually scare off the entrepreneur, the explorer, the person that gives the organisation a future.

A final and common trait is that particular processes, if breached, carry particular punishments, whether seen as punishments or not. No wise and perceptive person would fail to see this reality.

Literature Review

While some suggest that studies and individual cases show that job structures and work experiences have remained remarkably unchanged by the post-bureaucratic phase,

the common view is that while certain things must be accomplished in any organisation the nature and expectations of workers or participants and the milieu in which the organisation functions have changed significantly requiring adjustments, even different paradigms for maintaining coherence and inner integrity (Grey 2005, 85).

The need for reflexivity among leaders is significant. McGregor advises that the making of managers mostly rises from management's conception of the nature of its task and policies and practices which are constructed to implement this concept (McGregor (1960) 1985, xii). Covey warns that one cannot mix a knowledge worker, empowered to create focus, and then add an industrial age, command and control model for execution (Covey 2004, 274). Out of structure and design rise a set of behaviors and cultural expectations (Kanter 1983, 178).

There are various lists related to process issues that must be present in an empowering environment. One outlines sharing of appropriate and essential information, developing autonomy among workers within boundaries, and replacing hierarchy with self-directed teams as the process requirements (Randolph 2000, 101-103). Another list is similar, namely, sharing information, imposing structure, training, developing team to supplant hierarchy and given rewards (Quinn and Spreitzer 1997, 37-40).

If we use the three categories of the farmer we get a picture at once clear and out of balance. Rightly, the social milieu of structures and relationships receives the most attention, next the seed/person, and lastly the product. There is some natural overlap between the emphasis on relationships in the social milieu and attention to employee needs in the second.

The social processes spoken of are embedding principles in the culture, promoting pre-conditions, structural changes, pushing decisions down and creating boundaries for autonomous activity (Alleman 1992, 477-480; Foster and Howard 1999, 11-13; Foster-Fishman and Keys 1997, 345-369; Randolph 1995; 19-32). For example Marriot Hotels want their employees, when working with customers, to have latitude to meet a customer need so they give them a dollar limit that they can work within providing a safe zone of action (Quinn and Spreitzer 1997, 43-44).

Relational processes include nurturing, communicating honestly, and developing team involvement.

Within the three categories established for the seed of what it is, what it can be, and what it needs, processes include, training, nurturing, delegating, rewarding and monitoring (Galagan 1998, 27; Maysless and Popper 2003, 41-64; Menon 2001, 155-156; Quinn and Spreitzer 1997, 39-44; Spreitzer 1996, 489). Interestingly, studies have shown that there is little difference between monitoring in non-empowerment and empowerment units. Even though a case can be made that delegating is not in harmony with the deeper understandings of the nature of empowerment it remains on many lists.

In the category of product, two process issues are mentioned, working with a clear concept of the goal, and waiting wisely for the changes (Clutterbuck and Kernaghan 1994, 10; Quinn 1996 227).

The general vagueness of the processes suggests both a flexibility of application and, perhaps, confusion about the fundamental disharmony between much industrial age models for organisational action and the basic nature of empowerment. This would account for the weak emphasis on product, almost a disconnect between processes and

final outcomes. One also wonders if this is not, in part, why executives tend to be the main barrier to empowerment implementation (Argyris 1988, 101). It has also been noted that most managers have yet to encounter a change program that works (Argyris 1998, 104). Whether this is a self-fulfilling prophecy, I cannot tell.

A set of processes that work back from the final product goals or first things may be the answer to the contradictory mix of items.

3.5.5 Autoethnography and literature review: farmer and leadership

I was on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals for ten years. It brought me into contact with people whose books I read like Kaiser, the Old Testament professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, or Martin Marty the well-known church historian from the University of Chicago, or having dinner with Denis Kinlaw, former president of Asbury College. To top it off, the NAE represents about forty denominations and nearly thirty million constituents so it is seen as a politically important place. It was at an NAE convention that President Ronald Reagan gave his 'evil empire' speech. I got to see President George Bush, Sr. These are leaders of the top order.

The NAE grew up out of the liberal-conservative controversies of the mid 20th century as an antidote to the World Council of Churches. In fact you couldn't even be in the NAE if you were a member of the WCC.

After over thirty years the executive director, a southern gentleman, was retiring. The group wisely brought in an interim leader who served for a couple of years and then the young man, Mannoia, intelligent, great track record, just what the organisation

needed, I thought. So it was interesting that with all the high profile leaders, the organisation made all the mistakes a small untrained rural church would make in dealing with transition. Mannoia's reign soon turned into a firestorm. I started getting letters from the old southern gentleman, the former director. In two years Mannoia was gone. What happened to all the leadership knowledge and skill among the directors? Do we ask too much? Do we exclude too many?

In the world of organisational management there is a view that every organisation has two purposes, one associated with goal achievement, and the second with organisational maintenance. The balance and percentage of the presence of both is partly connected with the design and culture of a given social structure, but both must exist in varying degrees for organisational wellness not to be overwhelmed by organisational pathology. It is often true that the longer an organisation exists the more its tendencies lean to organisational maintenance. And it may often also be true, that an organisation shifts its focus without realizing it.

The small Methodist denomination I was part of began with a multiple purpose of promoting the doctrine that John Wesley called 'Scriptural holiness,' as well as reaching people with the gospel often through a robust foreign missions program. But the overriding emphasis on 'Scriptural holiness' resulted in an introspective culture where being always was more valued than doing, intention over education, character over skill. An unintended consequence was that good character was valued and incompetence overlooked. Incompetence here defined as execution of skills that repeatedly ignored outcomes incongruent with rhetoric about intention. Thus organisational maintenance of

its culture created a debilitating form of microscopic perfectionism. And it always looked back rather than forward for advice. This regularly makes control a primary trait.

Literature Review

The farmer has a lot of decisions to make and work to do. The buck stops with him or her. The variables within every task produce a complex job description.

Without question the greatest emphasis within empowerment literature is on leadership that suggests perhaps the Messianic view of leadership in the West and particularly in the United States, or perhaps that empowerment implementation requires the strong support and involvement of top management if it is to work (Spreitzer 1996, 488). Perhaps both are true.

Covey uses the terms empowerment and leadership interchangeably (Covey 2004, 127). Yet Argyris, looking over the time span from the 1950s to the 1980s asks why has there been so little growth in empowerment philosophy in the last thirty years (Argyris 1988, 98). After all this time the prevailing view among managers is still that empowerment is about giving power to subordinates (Randolph 2000, 94-96). Argyris declares that the number one reason for the roadblock to empowerment are the conscious and unconscious barriers thrown up by executives (Argyris 1998, 98).

Never the less there is evidence of an empowerment link between leadership and social identification, organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Chen 2003, 246-255; Menon 2001, 157-158; Obeng and Ugboro 2000, 248-253). Difficulty in grasping the type of leader that is not only a good leader but functioning in harmony with empowerment principles seems common. McGregor posits that there is not a definite list of qualities of an effective leader, yet lists are perhaps the primary tool for

communicating leadership qualities and dynamics in the West (McGregor 1960, 179-189). Yet many aspects of the list grow or decrease in importance depending on need. The list approach also is weak in describing the dynamic relationship between the leader and his or her surroundings. McGregor's view of leadership is about marshaling the required resources within a set of four variables, the character of the leader, the attitudes, needs, and choices of the followers, the character of the organisation, such as purpose, and structure, and the social, economic, and political context (McGregor 1960, 179-189).

While McGregor represents the leader in his or her social setting acting and being acted upon, the leadership style synonymous with empowerment is transformational leadership. It highlights a different set of traits and practices that reflects more on the leader's skills and gifts. Transformational leadership carries the expectation of growth, relationship, and significance. It involves instilling pride, self-respect, and faith in the leader and is centered on the articulation and reinforcement of a vision for the organisation. By one author's description the transformational leader has four qualities: inspirational motivation as a result of identifying and reinforcing the vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration like active listening, concern, and feedback, inspiration rising from goal alignment, vision casting and optimism in dealing with problems, and idealized influence coming from taking personal responsibility for actions, purposes and intents of achieving the goals (Gill 2002, 52-53).

Other leadership activities in the literature were: establishing vision, creating an atmosphere, climate, or culture, communication, purposeful relationships, learning or 'profound knowledge,' demand for performance, and coaching (Dansereau 1995, 127-146; Druskat and Wheeler 2001, pf1-5; Gomez and Rosen 2001, 53-69; Persico, Jr. 1991,

57-67; Popper 1997, 27-45; Quinn and Spreitzer 1997, 41-44, Spreitzer 1996, 483-488). One survey showed that leadership development was perceived by others as the number one responsibility of leadership (Berry 2004, 55).

The emphasis on leadership in empowerment literature is transformational, yet leaders are seen as the main roadblock to empowerment strategies. Transformational leadership is highly personal and projects an image of brilliance. Given the checkered score card of empowerment efforts, it is worth considering whether a leadership model such as McGregor suggests may be more productive in implementing an empowerment culture than the typical transformational leadership model now in vogue.

3.5.6 Empowerment and congregational studies

In contrast to the significant amount of literature specific to empowerment in organisational studies, the theme is more muted in congregational studies. There may be a number of explanations. First, the vocabulary may be different. Few studies use the term 'empowerment' in titles though there are exceptions (Stewart III 2001). But given the integration of insights from organisational studies into the enterprise of the church this does not seem to be an adequate explanation. When the term is used it is often related to social or community empowerment (Maton and Wells 1995; Durbin et al. 1994). Typically, however, one is more likely to see the term and theme used when discussing the ministry of the church in developing nations. Never the less the conclusion appears to be that the fundamental traits of empowerment have not found their way into the typical operational models of the protestant church of North America.

3.6 A summary

The autoethnographies highlight four conditions that seem prevalent in social structures. The first is unpredictability. Again and again, the circumstances that I found myself in were not events I could have anticipated yet they had impact. This reality would suggest the possibility of the need for flexible systems. Yet the literature postures much of its focus from a hierarchical perspective whether around processes or leadership issues that have control as a significant role.

The second condition was the invisibility of much of what took place. Often, neither I nor others were aware of what was actually happening. There were consistently unanticipated consequences. This would suggest the necessity of a position of reflexivity within an organisation. It seems that this blindness among certain actors was sometimes related to being an insider, where historical patterns were experienced as normal, and were attached to personal and organisational identity. This is problematic since definitions of empowerment seem to reflect a 'technique' viewpoint rather than a deeper understanding of the dynamics that is occurring in a truly empowering culture. This 'blindness' would also be a barrier to the seed metaphor reflecting on the 'malleable capacity' of others.

The third condition was the highly relational dynamics around the events that I described. This may suggest the power that is in relationships and an important avenue for further research. It is interesting that while structure and relational dynamics were the two prevalent categories under social milieu, most of the literature, while mentioning relational issues, framed much of the discussion of empowerment in highly

individualistic terms. So while empowering seems like it must have communal aspects in was frequently spoken of in non-communal ways.

A final condition was how seemingly simple and easy it was for me to slip into roles and scripts designed and written by others and embrace a set of values handed to me from others. One lesson from this is the power of the privileged voices in our lives. This would suggest insight into the avenues of influence in an organisation would be helpful. This seems especially significant since much of a present preferred model of leadership is very messianic.

It would seem reasonable then, that the research questions that arose in the introductory section are appropriate for further investigation. These questions arise from the basic query that if we already know what empowers people, then why is it so difficult for organisations to implement and sustain that kind of culture. Are there pre-conditions that the organisation or social structure needs to possess before it can implement and sustain an empowering culture? Are there internal traits or processes that are essential to implementing and sustaining an empowering culture? Is there a particular leadership model that is most compatible with the implementing and sustaining of an empowering culture? And, finally, are there particular benefits valued by the organisation that make the effort of implementing and sustaining an empowering culture worthwhile and even essential.

It is possible that while we are looking for answers to these questions, other questions and answers may emerge in the process of investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR
LOOKING FOR ANSWERS: METHODOLOGY AND THEORY
OF CASE STUDY RESEARCH

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline why I made the methodological choice of case study to gain access to the data pertaining to how organizations sustain empowering environments. I further outline the aspects of applying this methodological choice in the particular settings I was researching, reflecting on my choice of cases and the issues of case study processes including data collection and analysis.

4.2 Case study as a methodological choice

As a methodology, case study has had an ambiguous history within the social sciences. The term has been used inconsistently and with a lack of clarity. Within the literature, its salience has been varied and unpredictable. Platt notes it has been called other things, called it when it was not, and used in multiple disciplines sometimes in different ways, with differing historical antecedents. Today the room is divided between textbooks still challenging its use and proponents extolling its place as solidly within the social science research tradition (Platt 2007, 100, 102).

Along with traditional research communities it has been found particularly useful for those within feminism and some left-wing political groups who believe that too much of what passes as standard research methodology has embedded assumptions ‘grounded in establishment rationality’ (Oakley, 2000 cited in Platt 2007, 102).

It was between the World Wars and particularly in the United States when case study methodology gained a footing, first as an alternative to statistical methods and then more positively as a superior approach to accessing personal meanings. To this was added the diffusion of data and the valuing of 'rich context.' There was even the speculation that case study could offer some basis for generalisation.

But its short-lived prominence diminished in the 1950s as quantitative methods, augmented to give richer texture to its sampling, grew in popularity as the tools of choice for much research. The focus on meaning became more associated with 'participant observation' within qualitative methodology, and the modern sample survey developed as a preferred alternative to case study.

During this era, not only was the hypothetico-deductive model in ascendancy but case study was viewed as flawed with a bias toward confirmation of the researcher's hypotheses. However, by the mid 1960s new versions of qualitative methods were birthed, others were improved and the case study re-emerged with a fresh look as if it did not have a history. New and skilled qualitative researchers emerged (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster 2000; Stake 1995; Yin 1994; and Ragin and Becker, 1992). The influential 'grounded theory' of Glaser and Strauss (1967) moved away from the tried and true hypothetico-deductive model. Even in philosophy, as reflected by Diesing (1972, 158-163 cited in Platt 2007, 117) the view developed that there may be a better model of explanation using a more holistic pattern.

An early critic of case study, Donald Campbell (Campbell 1975, 178-193 cited in Platt 2007, 101) took a second look and decided that the richness of data presented by a case study suggested the theory is being tested with the 'degrees of freedom represented

by its multiple implications.’ Thus the criteria of evaluation were no longer experiments but its ‘own specific characteristics’ (Rosenblatt 1981, 195; Platt 2007, 100-102).

In the present, the use of the case study has been magnified by the practitioner who uses case study data to draw conclusions that can be applied to a specific organization’s needs. Stake (1995) and Yin (1984, 2003) are part of this movement. As an indication of its resonance in the practitioner population, Yin’s book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* has gone through thirty-eight printings as of 2007 (Platt 2007, 103).

The practitioner model seems to vary from the mainstream methodological discussion due to the perception that it suffers from a rush to generalisation as with Stake’s ‘naturalistic generalization’ in an effort to get to practical action (Stake 1995; Platt 2007, 102-103; Atkinson and Delamont, 1985).

There are a multitude of definitions of case study. Yin (2003, 13-14) calls case study an empirical inquiry that ‘investigates a contemporary phenomena within its real-life context.’ Lijphart, (1971, 691) refers to it as a method related to only one case. For Hammersley (1992, 185) it is as distinct as experiment or survey and involves investigating a ‘relatively small number of naturally occurring’ cases. Criswell (2007, 73) calls it a study within a ‘bounded system’ that depends on ‘multiple sources’ of information and results in a ‘case description report.’ Stoecker’s (1991, 97-98) view is that the term should be reserved for research projects that attempt to ‘explain holistically the dynamics of a certain historical period of a particular social unit.’ It is defined as ‘an in-depth, multi-faceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon, conducted in great detail and often relying on several data sources,’

by (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991, 2). Gillham (2000, 1) defines a case as ‘ a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw.’ It is an inherently qualitative methodology (Platt 2007, 111).

For the purposes of this research a combination of Stoecker (1991) and Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991), will be appropriate. I will define a case study as ‘an in-depth multi-faceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon, conducted in significant detail, relying on multiple data sources to explain holistically the dynamics of a certain historical period of particular social units.’ This research will treat each social unit as a substantive phenomenon rather than an analytic category (Platt 2007, 110).

4.3 The multi-case approach

The multi-case approach has been seen as an improvement in case study methodology and is now common. Initially one application of the comparative model came under criticism. It became a common practice to combine individual cases on a particular topic and using editorial skill, connect them and then draw conclusions or even theory. Since the case research was conducted with variant research questions, data collection methods and other aspects disconnected from the other cases, it left design a ‘retrospective’ issue and open to criticism related to contradictory methods and gaps, and a ‘lack of coordination to insure conceptual comparability’ (Platt 2007, 107).

At one time comparisons were forbidden either because every case was seen ‘as isolated and unique with classifications, hierarchies, correlations as imposed features’ or because each case was seen as typical and ‘part of a general process powered by outside determinates.’ Eventually researchers began to stray from these constraints concluding that ‘a case becomes the opportunity to discover knowledge about how it is both specific to and representative of a larger phenomenon. Its originality does not keep us from making comparisons, and its representativeness does not refer to a metasocial law, but to analytic categories’ (Wieviorka, 1992, 169-170).

Ragin (2000, 25) suggests that after considerable experimentation the number of cases used began to settle between one or two and more than fifty suggesting that this is where the comparative method applies.

At a deep level the goal of multiple cases is to ‘see processes and outcomes across cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions and then develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations’ (Huberman and Miles 1994, 172) Glaser and Strauss concur. They argue that by using ‘multiple comparison groups’ to find out ‘under what sets of structural conditions the hypotheses are minimized and maximized’ the researcher can ‘calculate where a given order of events or incidents is most likely to occur or not occur’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

However, there must be maintained a tension between the ‘particular and the universal,’ as we ‘pin down the specific conditions under which a finding will occur’ which helps us ‘form the more general categories of how those conditions may be related’ (Silverstein 1988 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 173). While considering cross-case work Noblit and Hare (1988 cited in Huberman and Miles, 1994, 173) advise

the researcher to keep in mind that ‘aggregating or averaging results across cases blurs’ the uniqueness of the local and leads to misinterpretation or superficiality. There is uniqueness in an individual’s development history over time, but ‘encapsulated with the general principles that influence its development’ (Huberman and Miles 1994, 173).

Lieberson critically contends that the reasoning used by Ragin and others to draw from a small number of case studies larger conclusions, compels them to work deterministically rather than probabilistically (Lieberson 1992 cited in Platt 2007, 109).

Yet the comparative method is a way of ‘reassuring yourself that the events and processes in one well-described setting are not wholly idiosyncratic’ (Huberman and Miles 1994, 172). Sewell (1967, 208-209 cited in Hammersley 1992, 38):

‘If an historian attributes the appearance of phenomenon A in one society to the existence of condition B he can check this hypothesis by trying to find other societies where A occurs without B or vice versa. If he finds no case which contradicts the hypothesis, his confidence in its validity will increase the level of his confidence depending on the number and variety of the comparisons made. If he finds contradictory cases, he will either reject the hypothesis outright or reformulate it and refine it so as to take into account the contradictory evidence and then subject it again to comparative testing.’

The researcher enters the research of multiple cases asking, ‘Will I find in others what I find in one’ (Yin, 1984 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 174-175)? Where there are only a small number of cases available the historical-comparative style can deal with them much more effectively than variable-based quantitative approaches (Rueschemeyer 2003 cited in Platt 2007, 118).

4.4 Generalisation

A major area of controversy in case study methodology concerns how it might contribute to empirical generalisation or to general theory, theory meaning ‘statements about necessary relationships among categories of phenomena.’ What is there about the situation studied that is generally relevant (Hammersley 1992, 91)? The dilemma is illustrated by the fact that it is hard to disagree that cases appropriate to the research purpose should be chosen. A descriptive goal gives no guidance at all on what features should be selected for description so at a human level the theoretical task cannot be avoided. Even the standard qualitative question, ‘what is going on here’ requires more than surface descriptions because ‘reality is layered and involves interactions’ (Platt 2007, 113). It may be conceded that the scope suggesting theory must needs be narrower and in need of further validation through addition research, but it is the position of my research that to answer the question, ‘what is going on here,’ requires a level of theoretical suggestion. White (1992, 88-89) in response to Lieberman’s criticism of using few cases for broader interpretations, says that such interpretations at the practical level remain a ‘prime source of new social science theory and explanatory case studies are constitutive of the idea worlds with which acts construct and reconstruct their perceived realities.’

While avoiding ‘naturalistic generalization’ (Stake, 1995) with its feature of tacit knowledge based on personal experience, and agreeing with Atkinson and Delamont, (1985 cited in Platt 2007, 102) that the method is too vague, I prefer Yin’s bold suggestion that case studies should be able to generalize to theory, which may be tested later, and that this approach does not require representativeness (Yin 2003, 16,38).

Huberman and Miles (1994, 29) take the position that generalisability in multi-case studies is matched to underlying theory rather than the larger universe, and Robson (2002, 177) concurs that case studies allow for the possibility of theoretical or analytical generalisation.

A primary barrier for some researchers is the issue of representativeness which is part of the 'hierarchy of statistical inference.' A distribution of characteristics in a population is inferred from a sample, which 'only provides plausible basis for inference if it can claim to be a representative sample' (Platt 2007, 106). Platt continues that statistical representativeness is not a pre-requisite for the testing of theories. The key feature of the classic logic of experimental design which is structured specifically to test theory, requires cases 'randomly allocated to experimental and control groups,' not a representative sample (Platt 2007, 113).

To extend the argument, Mitchell (1983, 192,198) argues that there can be logical inference. He writes, 'A case study is essentially heuristic; it reflects in the events portrayed features which may be constructed as a manifestation of some general abstract theoretical principle' and 'the inference about the logical relationship between the two characteristics is not based upon representativeness of the sample and therefore upon its typicality, but rather upon the plausibility or upon the logical nexus between two characteristics.'

Therefore, Platt (2007, 107) notes that the issue of generalising from a case study is an issue not of the number of cases but of the adequacy of the theory [and] the 'cogency of its theoretical interpretation against a background of knowledge of other cases.'

Still generalisation from case study is theoretical not empirical and ‘remains tentative’ until further research is done (Mitchell 1983 and Danziger 1990 cited in Platt 2007, 114). A theory of wider scope cannot be tested on data from which it has been derived, though it can rule out potential theories that do not fit them. As Lieberson (1985, 70 cited in Platt 2007, 114) points out, the correlation between potential cause and effect is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for causation.

It may also be possible to generalise to theoretical propositions rather than to populations or universes (Bryman 1988, 90,91) Bryman gives the example of using the discussion of Glaser and Strauss on ‘awareness contexts’ in relation to dying in hospital, noting that the issue of whether the particular hospital studied is ‘typical’ is not the critical issue; ‘what is important is whether the experiences of dying patients are typical of the broad class of phenomena’ in reference to the theory proposed. Subsequent research would then focus on the validity of the proposition in other milieus such as doctors’ surgeries. Hammersley (1992, 166) critiquing the emphasis of behaviourism, notes that it is not possible to study human behaviour without attributing meanings to it and that behaviourists do this despite themselves.

4.5 Theory elaboration

Within this methodological context, I have suggested some theoretical ideas or hypotheses of a phenomenon related to how social structures impact the empowerment efforts in organisations. I have used a case study methodology with multiple cases and multiple data collection methods. The cases will be analysed sequentially as independent cases, with constant feedback to the initial theoretical ideas, using the data to modify,

extend, or specify more fully the theory in what Vaughan calls 'theory elaboration' (Vaughan 1992, 175).

The approach of theory elaboration to cases and data analysis is authored by Diane Vaughan who used the process in studying unlawful organisational behaviour as well as the better-known space shuttle Challenger disaster (Vaughan, 1992, 187-195).

The typical approach to research and case study research in particular tends to include looking for a group of cases as similar as possible in which to study a particular phenomenon, under the assumption that if similar traits are found in all cases within certain contexts it heightens the researchers' ability to generalise. Vaughan argues that such specialization often results in 'fixed pre-conceptions' about the organisational form that actually results in unacknowledged disadvantages for theorising; that this lack of variation can 'inhibit' discovery and development of models and concepts that have potential for being broadly applicable. She is, however, not talking about formal theory. Never the less she believes the present research model often results in fragmented rather than integrated theory. She suggests that using different sizes, complexity or functions can improve usefulness. As an example a researcher, in trying to understand internal conflict issues within a social subset of an organization might study family conflict and then see if those models shed insight into how the organisation is functioning.

She has definitions within theory elaboration. Theory means theoretical tools in general, such as models or concepts, rather than a more restricted formal meaning of a set of interrelated propositions that are testable and explain some phenomena. By elaboration she means 'the process of refining a theory, model, or concept in order to specify more carefully the circumstances in which it does or does not offer potential for

explanation.’ Case means ‘organisational forms that are analysed regarding some event, activity, or circumstance, for example, social control in family, state, or professional association’ (Vaughan 1992, 173-176).

Typical application of the process would include as many as nine steps. First the researcher would start by using theory in loose fashion as a guide. Second, cases would be chosen in part because of their differences, for example, in variety of function. Third, analysis would be sequential looking particularly for the ‘idiosyncratic to maximize insight.’ Fourth, the guiding theoretical notions would be assessed. Fifth, a basis for reassessing, rejecting, confirming, adjusting, or adding theory would be made. Sixth, ‘openness of meaning’ as described by Kaplan (1964) would be maintained for further research into that which looks promising. Seventh, greater specificity in terms of clarification of theoretical notions, limits of applicability, and an analysis of what is not clear would be sought. Eighth, the researcher would expect that results would both magnify patterns and magnify questions that persist. Ninth, the researcher would return to the beginning, identifying the defining patterns of each case (Vaughan 1992, 173-176).

Theory elaboration has three benefits. First, because shifting units of analysis can produce qualitatively different information, case comparison can generate ‘startling contrasts that invite us to transform our theoretical constructs.’ Second, selecting cases that vary organisational form sometimes allows the researcher to vary the level of analysis. And third, by shifting forms and levels of analysis the researcher can get implications for large organisations or different organisations from a small organisation (Vaughan 1992, 176-177).

Due to the variety of forms, the researcher must make clear the characteristics of the cases with 'explicit attempts' to distinguish similarities and differences in the organisational forms and consider how they affect the findings while specifying the theoretical consequences for comparisons between cases (Vaughan 1992, 178).

Alternating units of analysis is possible because of the hierarchical nature of organisational forms (Vaughan 1992, 179). The historical precedent for this model of research is found in Blumer and Glaser and Strauss (Vaughan 1992, 181). However, it varies in one respect with each. Blumer asserts the 'distinctive expression' while Vaughan's efforts include showing the relationships between concepts as they are framed within theories or models. And while Glaser and Strauss believe verification and discovery cannot happen at the same time, Vaughan believes that the researcher is verifying one notion, while contradicting another, and discovering another simultaneously. Theory elaboration depends on testing by comparison. 'Data from each case are used to assess ('test') some theoretical apparatus' while allowing the researcher to 'proceed with explaining similarities and differences among collectivities and the processes that create, maintain, and change patterned behaviour.' Vaughan calls this the researcher's fundamental task (Vaughan 1992, 181).

Two limitations are that this approach is more oriented toward identifying the presence or absence of factors in different cases rather than evaluating the relative importance of those factors, and a case-oriented methodology may give undue weight to cases where an expected factor is not found (Vaughan 1992, 184).

4.6 Case choices

This empirical research involves three cases. Each case is a small organisation with less than thirty full-time employees. The choice of size was made after reviewing issues of manageability, complexity, and commonalities with other organizations. The size of the cases also reflects the preponderance of organizations in each category.

There are two types of multiple-case design, parallel and sequential. I am using the parallel design where all cases are selected in advance and conducted at the same time (Chmiliar 2010, 582). However, I am analysing one case at a time and only then moving to cross-case analysis. The cases were chosen from west of the Mississippi River in the United States. Due in part to space and age issues of the region, the West has a different ethos. In a nation already known for its high level of independence the West is known as a region where, in part due to the great space, this trait is magnified. And, due in part to its young age, it is known, within the nation, as a region marked by optimism or hopefulness (Shinobu et al. 2010; Stegner 2000; Wrobel 2002). The CEO or equivalent from each case stated, using Sprietzer's characteristics for empowerment, that their organisation was aspiring to be an empowering organization and possessed at least some functioning characteristics of empowerment. (Huberman and Miles 1994, 29).

The three cases in type are a for-profit, a non-profit, and a church organisation.

While there are differences, these organizational forms:

have elements in common that have implications for theory elaboration. They share aspects of structure. In addition, they have in common processes that are natural concomitants of organizational life: conflict, social integration, deviance, cooperation, power, socialization, social control, decision-making, social change. Certainly, the varieties of organizational forms are not strictly comparable. Differences exist between them, yet they are sufficiently analogous to offer us alternative settings in which to explore a particular phenomenon and compare the findings' (Vaughan 1992, 180).

Another arena in which organisations have commonality is the ‘varieties of group life,’ such as patterned interactions, groups, simple formal organisations and complex organizations (Vaughan 1992, 179). Not all organisations have all four but it is not uncommon to have as many as three. The dynamics of each case have similar commonalities. The three cases have different philosophical bases. I will look at general characteristics and particular features of each case.

4.6.1 For-profit

A for-profit organization in the United States can typically have one of three owner models: a sole proprietorship of one owner which comprises approximately seventy-two percent of all businesses in the United States, a partnership of two or more owners comprising approximately eight percent of businesses, or a corporation where the company creates stock and people and organisations buy that stock. The corporation comprises approximately twenty percent of all businesses in the United States. In the first two, the owners or partners have personal liability related to business debt, but in the third the stockholders do not share any fiduciary responsibility (Carlton and Perloff 2005, 13). Interestingly, while corporations account for only twenty percent of businesses they account for approximately eighty-seven percent of business sales. In 1999 the United States had six million companies and only three-tenths of one percent had 500 employees or more but accounted for fifty percent of all employees, while eighty-nine percent of all companies had less than twenty employees (Carlton and Perloff 2005, 13, 20). Not only does the small business account for eighty-nine percent of businesses, at the end of the

20th Century, sixty percent of major inventions were the work of individuals or small businesses (Barrow 1993, 31).

Carlton and Perloff explain that a 'firm' is an organisation that 'transforms inputs, resources it purposes, into outputs, valued products that it sells,' and it earns the difference. Thus most firms exist for profit (Carlton and Perloff 2005, 11-12). However, perhaps the most prominent business writer in the United States in the 1990's, Peter Drucker says that profit, while clearly the test of validity of the business decisions, is not at the heart of a business enterprise. He suggests the first test of business is not maximizing profit but achieving sufficient profit to cover the risks of economic activity and avoid loss. He further declares that the profit motive is a construct of classical economists (Drucker 1974, 55).

What follows is a brief description of Drucker's view of the business enterprise. I give it to illustrate how differently business language and concepts are from typical churches or non-profits. Drucker says that the first purpose of a business is to create a customer and that business has two basic functions, namely, marketing and innovation. Marketing is the distinguishing function of a business, setting it apart from all other human organizations. In Drucker's view it is central. Innovation or the provision of different economic satisfactions is the second major function. Innovation is not invention but the task of giving human and material resources new and greater wealth-producing capacity. The administrative function of business is productivity or wisely utilizing wealth-producing resources to discharge its purpose of creating a customer, creating a balance between all functions of production that will give the greatest output for the smallest effort. Lastly, strategy that is the determination of what the key activities are,

precedes structure. So the first responsibility of management is to answer, 'What our business is,' and 'what it should be.' Theodore Vail said, 'our business is service.' So the business asks a series of questions about customers: Who is our customer, where is our customer, what does our customer buy, and what is value to our customer (Drucker 1974, 56-76)?

Brown (1971, vii) notes that behaviour at work is greatly affected by organization. So the description of Drucker, defining a unique organizational perspective, certainly has ramifications in regard to how the internal structure and environment of a business are established and function.

My case study research will focus on a small business. Along with the specialized view of purpose and reality, Barrow suggests that survey work among small business leaders found that competition, recruitment, management succession, new product development, and resources for building and equipment were challenges they put at the top of their concerns (Barrow 1993). As well, while the statistics are debated, they show a very high number of new businesses go out of business within eighteen months. A common contributing factor is undercapitalization. But among the top human causes are lack of expertise, lack of managerial expertise, unbalanced experience such as having experience in sales but not finance, and inexperience with the product or service (Barrow 1993, 40-42). The small business can also be hampered as it goes through transition phases, of which he describes five (Brown 1993, 6-14).

4.6.2 Non-profit

Into the standard paradigm of market and state there has arrived a 'third sector' entity known as the non-profit. While it exists in many other countries and cultures with some overlapping and some distinctive characteristics, it is nowhere a stronger part of the national presence than in the United States both in absolute and relative terms (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 98). Some surmise that this is in part due to the general antagonism America has to government as well as a strong individualism that pervades the culture (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 98-99).

In raw terms there are approximately 1.6 million non-profits in the United States within twenty-six categories as defined by the federal tax code (Worth 2009, 11). It is a vibrant sector of the organizational terrain. From 1987-1997 the number of non-profits grew by over sixty-two percent (Worth 2009, 11). One-half of all hospital beds and one-half of all colleges and universities in the United States are non-profit along with sixty percent of all social service agencies (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 99). In 1990 the non-profit sector accounted for over \$346 billion in annual expenditure (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 36). The sector accounts for over seven million jobs or just under seven percent of the national workforce and one in seven service sector jobs (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 36) and over six percent of the annual GDP (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 99).

Interestingly, a breakdown of its income sources are fifty percent from fees and sales, thirty percent from public or government and twenty percent from private sources. This varies widely, however. For example in the category of churches the private funding rises from twenty percent to ninety-five percent (Salamon and Anheier 1996, 99).

A non-profit is defined by six characteristics: Formally constituted, organisationally separate from the government, non-profit making, self-organising, voluntary (Salamon and Anheier 1996, xvii), and Worth adds the sixth, of public benefit (Worth 2009, 44).

The non-profit has a number of traits that have similarities with for-profit organizations. It tends to be value-led and plenty of for-profit companies show the same trait. Yet it can be stated that the non-profit is a value-rational organisation (Hanvey and Philpot 1996, 27-28). Second the non-profit shows a range of leadership and organisational styles similar to for-profit organisations, ranging from charismatic founder with central control to relatively autonomous local units (Hanvey and Philpot 1996, 31). Much of the leadership dynamic at the top levels appears to be very similar to mainline leadership thinking. End of chapter bibliographies in Dym and Hutson's book on *'Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations'* as well as Worth's *Nonprofit Management: Principles and Practice* strongly favour 'typical' American leadership books (2005; 2009). As well, most organisational processes like communication, groups, and decision-making seem typical, and like many organisations, structure is determined by the task environment (Worth 2009, 50).

Yet there are some very unique challenges due to the nature of the non-profit that certainly play into how those within the organisation function. First there is the question of whether there is a non-profit culture and the answer has been that to some extent, yes. It can be described as a 'voluntaristic culture' (Ott 2001, 289 cited in Worth 2009, 52). Others have called it a 'service culture' (Letts, et.al, 1999a, 33-34 cited in Worth 2009, 52). But Anheier (2005, 253 cited in Worth 2009, 53) suggests that an

added feature is the cultural trait of ‘conflict avoidance rather than engagement.’ Second, non-profits tend to have open systems making them highly interactive but also dependent on their external environments. This is often due to resource dependency, volunteer dependency or social mission agreement (Worth 2009, 45). Third, they often have multiple constituencies. The members of the governing boards, nearly always volunteers, are often chosen as representative of a particular constituency. Many non-profits have background communities within which the organisation is embedded (Hanvey and Philpot 1996, 27-29). This obviously invites tension and even a certain slowness in responding (Worth 2009, 46). Fourth, they are nearly always resource dependent, and this dependency impacts internal management and structure (Butler and Wilson 1990, 8). Resource dependency theory suggests that we can understand an organisation less by looking at its internal structures and dynamics than by ‘focusing on the interdependencies with external organisations and individuals’ who hold power by virtue of resources (Worth 2009, 47). This resource dependency can impact internal structure and the power of relationship, as well as result in goal displacement and even isomorphism (Worth 2009, 47-49). As an example, Pfeffer (2003, xiii cited in Worth 2009, 48) states that ‘The people, groups, or departments inside organisations that manage important environmental dependencies, and help the organization obtain resources, [hold] more power as a result of their critical role.’ A fifth feature of the non-profit is that they are mission driven. Drucker (1990, 3) says in the non-profit, mission is first (Worth 2009, 24). This, rather than economic gain, is the bottom line of the non-profit. But this can make change difficult if the need or environment rapidly changes. And sixthly, the impact of resource dependency, open systems, laser focus on mission, and multiple

constituencies suggests a CEO skill base that along with the usual traits, is adept at the 'political' side of organisational life, recognizing 'the interplay of the organisation's important constituencies' (Worth 2009, 103).

The fact that the non-profit is an important part of organisational life in the United States, as well as the unique challenges that it faces, make it a useful choice in discussing empowerment theory.

4.6.3 Church

While there are no exact numbers on how many churches are in the United States, around 335,000 seems near the mark. Of this number approximately 322,000 are termed Christian and about 12,000 non-Christian. Between twenty to forty percent of the population attend a weekend service on any given weekend. The median size of a weekend congregation is around seventy-five. There are 1,210 churches with weekend attendances over 2,000 and of these approximately sixteen percent, or about 200 are over 5,000. There are 69 million Catholics, 16.2 million Southern Baptists, 8 million Methodists and 6.9 million Latter Day Saints (Hartford Institute For Religious Research 2010). The above statistics would at least suggest that in the United States, church remains a very visible, active part of the organisational landscape.

It does not appear likely that of the three types of organisations I am looking at, any of them have as much of a chasm between rhetoric and actual function as the church. On one hand those within it describe it in nearly 'other worldly' terms. It is the 'body of Christ' (Dillistone 1951, 9), 'belonging to God' (Watson 1978, 65) and 'connected to the historical Jesus' (Torrance 1979, 422). It sees its activities and structures in terms of

‘ministry’ (Anderson 1979, vii), ‘charismatic structure’ (Kung 1979, 458), and refers to leadership in terms of ‘consecration,’ ‘laying on of hands,’ and ‘ordination,’ all suggesting a divine connection and intervention (Torrance 1979, 412-423). And its purposes, to ‘change the entire human enterprise’ (Trueblood 1967, 100-101), and have as its ‘mark’ something no less elusive than love (Watson 1978, 356). Anderson (1979, viii) says that the three purposes of the church are to live a certain way, proclaim a particular message, and serve those around and those in need. Thus, the relationship of people in the church towards the church is unique as expressed by Trueblood (1967, 100), ‘when a Christian expresses sadness about the church, it is always the sadness of a lover.’ Watson (1978, 39) reminds us of the Scriptures declaration that Christ will build his church. So we are not surprised to read that the primary audience for the church is God Himself (Lindgren 1965, 35).

Therefore, neither are we surprised that when practical, relational, leadership, and organizational concerns are mentioned, the response is often something like, ‘that is too business oriented,’ or that ‘smacks of manipulation’ (Engstrom 1983, 10). This resistance to ‘normal’ discourse about the organisation is predictable given the early rhetorical focus. So Rudge illustratively expresses the concern that there appears to be ‘a gulf between the church and the world,’ and he questions to what extent secular knowledge can be used in the church (Rudge 1976, 3). Rudge, speaking of Minear’s book on images of the church in the New Testament suggests that ‘Minear seems to be saying that there doesn’t seem to be a close correlation between New Testament imagery and the vocabulary and concepts of the behavioural sciences. The former, because of ‘divine orientation’ remains distinct from the familiar language relating to human groups.

[And further] there may be something about the nature of the church which cannot be comprehended by human sciences' (Rudge 1976, 164).

Then we read Behrens, a barrister, who writes to help the church with issues related to property, tax law, legal resolutions, liability, legal governing bodies, finances, elections, annual meetings, computer practices, handling the press, copyright law, insurance, and records and it appears we are in the business department of any university or listening in on the management team of a for profit business (Behrens 1998, xiii). And despite its unique purposes many leaders consider the church 'an organization just like any other' (Beveridge 1971, 10). Beveridge goes on to say that any group has two group activities, task achievement and group maintenance (Beveridge 1971, 16). The sound of this is in the language of any organisation, that churches need to be well-managed. Bill Hybels, the respected and influential large church leader in the United States suggests that one of the problems in the American Church is that we put pastors and not leaders into leadership roles (Hybels and Hybels 1997) Lindgren who appears to be trying to bridge the gap between the two perspectives, quotes James Gustafson's analysis that 'since the church is composed of persons in a community, it shares certain common characteristics with all other human communities' (Lindgren 1965, 33). Or put more succinctly one leader suggested that no pastor failed because he couldn't parse a Greek word (Robert Trosen, pers. comm.)

These competing visions of the church create particular problems in defining reality as well as how people see their environment.

Hudson (1995 cited in Bemrose 1996, 112) gives seven categories of challenges regarding non-profits, but Bemrose feels they are entirely applicable to churches. They are:

1. Objectives which are difficult to define precisely; resulting in a temptation to adopt fuzzy objectives which do not provide a good basis for effective management;
2. Performance which is hard to measure: vague objectives making it harder to develop a clear sense of progress;
3. Accountability to many different people and organisations: all having a critical impact on the style and culture of the organisation;
4. Intricate governing and management structures; built up over the years to meet particular needs and balance different interests, but often making decision-making complex and time-consuming;
5. High level of volunteer input: requiring that volunteer's views are listened to and that they are actively involved in the decision-making process;
6. No financial bottom line to determine priorities: profitability or discounted cash flow cannot be used to decide how resources should be allocated;
7. Importance of people's values: voluntary organisations and churches have to pay particular attention to people's beliefs and assumptions if they are to be effective.

4.7 Case data collection

The cases to which I was granted access are typical in the sense of size, location, common activity, structure, and purposes. No further representativeness was sought.

One goal was to ‘see’ the organization through the eyes of the employee. Respondents in each organization were identified as being in one of three employee categories, namely, leadership/management, production, or support. All are full-time. This allows me to highlight the possibility that an organisation could be empowering at one level and yet disempowering at another.

I sought a minimum participation of approximately fifty percent of full-time employees in each case and while church and non-profit often use considerable volunteer participation, it is my view that the differences were too great for useful comparisons for this research.

Data collection instruments designed prior to use, were utilized due to multiple cases and the importance of comparability. Multiple-case analysis requiring cross case analysis needs some standardization of instruments (Huberman and Miles 1994, 35-36). In each case a series of five data collection tools were utilized.

Two surveys and the individual interview were constructed without reflection of previous data, but rather, from a conceptual model. Survey one was built around Sprietzer’s four characteristics of empowerment. Its purpose was to test the statement of the primary leader that the organisation did aspire to be an empowering environment in which to work and that there were signs that such an environment was active. This survey was a Likert scale of thirteen questions, each with five options (Sprietzer 1996). The

second survey was designed following Hersey and Huczinski and Buchanan's typical categories of organisational activity to communicate what people felt was really happening in the organization (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson 1996; Huczinski and Buchanan 2010). Its purpose was to help me understand 'what is going on,' in and through the typical organisational activities. It was a questionnaire of six sections on leadership, decision-making, group cohesion, communication, conflict, and motivation. Each section had five questions in Likert scale format, and then the participant was invited to pick two questions out of each section and write an essay type response. The semi-structured interview schedule was based on the categories of the research questions. Each respondent participated in an individual semi-structured interview. The CEO or equivalent also participated in a semi-structured interview with a set of questions particular for that organisational position. The focus group schedule lifted themes from the interview responses. In each organisation there were participants from three tiers of employees, management, production, and support and the focus group involved two tiers, production and support. I was looking here for tacit knowledge related to their empowerment experiences that might surface with the interchanges among participants.

Using multiple tools makes sense as a reminder of the partiality of any one context of data collection and can overcome incomplete views (Denzin 1970 cited in Silverman 1993, 157). The purpose is not to 'adjudicate' between responses but to see more clearly. Triangulation can also reveal that data from one set of tools does not agree with data from another set of tools. This does not mean data is untrue but that the presumed relationship does not exist or does not exist as we thought (Gillham 2000, 30).

The goal was to see the organisation through the eyes of the individual respondent. Social meaning is constituted by what people do and say in everyday life (Erickson 1977, 58). Though we are warned that the experience of the subject is shaped by cultural forms of representation (Silverman 1993, 6).

The interviews were semi-structured. This type, located between structured and un-structured, tries to address a number of predetermined topics areas. All questions are not necessarily prepared in advance and some evolve as the interview progresses. They are used when the researcher's goal is to compare responses while at the same time endeavor to understand their unique experiences. The semi-structured interview shares some features with the open-ended interview in that it allows respondents to use their 'unique ways of defining the world' and to raise issues not contained in the schedule, thus creating a higher possibility of reflecting more closely what they are thinking in context (Denzin 1970, 125 cited in Silverman 1993, 94).

There is an on-going debate about the status of interview accounts. One issue of debate is whether interview accounts are true or false representations of such features or attitudes and behaviour or are they 'accounts' whose main interest lies in how they are constructed rather than their accuracy (Silverman 1993, 15). For the purposes of this research the issue was what do respondents 'believe' is happening, whether it is accurate at every level and instance or not. 'We need not hear interview responses simply as true or false reports on reality. Instead, we can treat such responses as displays of perspectives and moral forms' (Silverman 1993, 107). A second issue of debate is that interview accounts can include 'social control' depending on how they are interpreted by the respondent (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 110-111 cited in Silverman 1993, 95-

96) and the interview can just be producing a cultural script (Silverman 1993, 96). It is readily assumed in this research that whatever else an interview is, it also included portions of a cultural script. The task is not to ignore it and make the mistake of taking 'on board a common sense assumption about the immediacy and validity of accounts of human experience' (Silverman 1993, 96). It is also true that interview data can be biased because of bad interviews or interviewees including the interviewee's intellect, comprehension, or distorted view of reality (Silverman 1993, 107). Pattison (et al. 1999, 46) highlights the understanding of case study responses as 'value-laden artifacts' and suggests that such a view is an ethical requirement.

There are at least six problems which can distort interviewees' responses, including that the respondent possesses different interactional roles from the interviewer, the problem of self-representation in the early stages, fleeting relationships which give the respondent little commitment to not fabricate, difficulty in penetrating private worlds, relative status of interviewer and interviewee, and the context of the interview (Denzin 1970, 133-138 cited in Silverman 1993, 97).

Opportunity for feedback was done within the context of Abrams counsel that 'overt respondent validation is only possible if the results on the analysis are compatible with the self-image of the respondents' (Abrams 1984, 8 cited by Silverman 1993, 159). However, when viewing the respondent's feedback responses there is no reason to assume that 'members have privileged status as commentators on their actions' so it is not validation but rather another source of data insight that is sought (Fielding and Fielding 1986, 43 cited in Silverman 1993, 159).

4.8 Case processes

Remembering that ‘no research is untouched by human hands’ part of the process goal is to conduct the case study protocol in a way that diminishes unwarranted, unnecessary and unhelpful influences realizing that the researcher is ‘not working in a pristine environment’ (Silverman 1993, 26).

Access was gained by request of the CEO or equivalent on the basis of a personal interview in which I explained the purpose, methods, and boundaries of my case study research. Next, every employee was sent a description of the research and methods. All were invited to review a consent form showing methods, time commitments, issues of ethics, confidentiality and use of material that would impact on their consideration to participate. They were asked to sign, date, and return it via email or letter according to their preference. A signed consent form was collected from all respondents who chose to participate and they were each given copies to retain for their records.

Survey Monkey, an on-line tool, was used for the first two surveys. Each respondent received notice prior to a survey link being sent and a time frame for completion.

Interview schedules were established via email and held on-site at their place of employment with all but one person who could not come to that location and so was met at a place of his or her choice. Interviews lasted no more than one hour and were recorded with permission and transcribed.

In some cases, at the end of the interview, the respondent was invited to participate in a focus group to be held later. Following the focus group for each case, interviews were conducted with the CEO or equivalent of the organization. At the end of

the interviews participants were invited to review and revise any statements they may have made and were given the opportunity for further communication if there was further desire to edit their remarks.

4.9 Ethics

Being naïve about ethics is unethical (Huberman and Miles 1994). Robson (2002, 65) states that ‘ethics refers to rules of conduct.’ Although there are no well-formulated set of ethical guidelines usable by qualitative researchers across a range of disciplines, due in part to the emphasis on ‘multiple realities, researcher interpretation, the emphasis on the idiosyncratic local context’ and ‘closeness to the respondent’ every effort must be made to insure the highest standards for the sake of the quality of the research and the treatment of people (May 1987 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 289). I used a utilitarian and deontological model of ethics including informed consent, avoidance of harm, confidentiality, reciprocity, avoidance of wrong, and fairness (Flinders 1992 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 290). Gray (2004, 235) and Patton (2002, 408-409) have similar and overlapping lists of the ethical behaviour expected of the researcher.

First, I utilised an ethics committee formed of two professors from two universities who reviewed my forms and protocol, in keeping with the view that ‘transparency’ is part of an ethical culture (Cardador and Rupp 2001, 170). In following the protocol reviewed by an ethics committee, I made numerous decisions that are illustrated in the following. In gaining access to an organization, I explained both to gatekeepers and potential participants the boundaries and purposes of my research and

their freedom to participate, not participate, or withdraw. I also reviewed with all participants how I would keep data secure, maintaining their anonymity. For participants of focus groups I chose only personnel in the production and support levels of the organisation so that supervisors would not be part of the discussion. In regard to two cases, people were informed that I had a personal relationship with someone in their organization. This is in line with Stake's (2006, 87) admonition 'to identify affiliations.' To provide as much 'informed' consent as possible, along with securing a signed statement from each participant, I rehearsed with participants prior to interviews their right to question or not answer or withdraw, as well as reminding them of the purpose and boundaries of the research and my efforts to insure anonymity. These boundaries to research serve as protector of participants since in the research relationship it is 'inevitable that issues of power come into focus' (Etherington 2004, 226).

Gray (2004, 235) states that an ethical goal must be that 'the participants should not be harmed or damaged in any way by the research,' and that at the end of the research process no one should have been made 'less able to carry out their responsibilities' (Stake 1995, 60). It comes down to two questions: 'Would I like this action to be applied to everyone including me'[and] 'will I treat every person I encounter as an end, and not as a means to something I want' (Huberman and Miles 1994, 289)?

The CEO or equivalent of each organisation was promised a synopsis of findings of my research after the research and writing process had concluded. Following the collection, analysis, and interpretation an individual case report was written and then a synthesized report of all three cases.

4.10 Case analysis

At the heart of analysis is something as simple as Agar's question 'what is going on here' (Agar 1986 cited in Silverman 1993, 30)? 'Commitment to explicating the subject's interpretation of social reality' is at the heart of qualitative research (Bryman 1988, 72 cited in Silverman 1993 24).

The main question, at least in case-study research is the quality of the analysis rather than the recruitment of the sample or the format of the interview (Silverman 1993, 22). In the analysis what people say in answer to interview questions does not have a stable relationship to how they behave in naturally-occurring situations (Silverman 1993, 150). It is also good to remember the advice to 'study what is observable' (Silverman 1993, 52). While the research will not be tethered to this view, it is good to remember that too much time on the non-seeable can reduce the research effort to speculation. The goal is to discover how a particular phenomenon is 'locally produced through the activities of particular people in particular settings' (Silverman 1993, 37).

Analysis of these case studies begins with the understanding that words will be the basic form of data (Huberman and Miles 1994, 51). We are reminded that words and phrases do not contain a meaning like a 'bucket contains water,' but rather they have the meaning they have by being a choice made about its significance in a given context (Bliss, Monk and Ogborn, 1983 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 56). Case-oriented analysis is 'good at finding specific, concrete, historically-grounded patterns common to small sets of cases' (Huberman and Miles 1994 174).

An analysis map involved five steps, listed linearly, though applied iteratively, namely:

Step 1- Individual respondent within case tool by tool including variables. This allows the respondent who, in an individual case may have responded to four tools, to 'speak' in comparing responses.

Step 2- Group response within case tool by tool. This provides a 'picture' of an individual case and analysing tool by tool provides for the opportunity to see how a group responded with each tool.

Step 3- Between cases tool by tool. This begins the multi-case comparison, allowing interviews to be compared with interviews, for example.

Step 4- Between cases between tools. In this step for example, I compare what interviewees said in one case with what respondents said in a focus group from another case.

Step 5- Multi-level or organic analysis. This is a holistic view, allowing issues to surface that may go beyond the linear coding.

This approach reflects the advice of Ragin who recommends considering the case as a whole entity, looking at configurations, associations, causes, and effects within the case and only then turning to comparative analysis (Ragin 1987 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 174). Often a key variable may not be wholly clear without comparative analysis which may eventually lead to 'pattern clarification' (Huberman and Miles 1994, 175).

Two of the sub strategies of Noblit and Hare result in useful questions: Can the findings of one study be used to predict those of another, and vice versa? And are there apparently contradictory cross-case findings (Noblit and Hare 1988 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 174-175)?

A standard approach of analysis sequence was followed including affixing codes, marginal notations, using coding to look for similar phrases, relationship between variables and themes, gradually elaborating a small set of hypotheses that cover the consistencies, and confronting the hypotheses with a formalised body of knowledge.

The analytic challenge is finding 'coherent descriptions and explanations that still include all of the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions inherent in personal and social life. The risk is forcing the logic' (Huberman and Miles 1994, 14-15).

4.11 Case coding

There are three levels of coding. Coding at level one has three categories of codes, codes connected to a conceptual grid, the actor's experience, and the researcher's reflections. The first two categories are similar to etic and emic levels of analysis (Huberman and Miles 1994, 61).

Within the conceptual grid I am looking for ways that the empowerment characteristics tie together with items of the hypotheses within the framework of the organisation activities. While some of these categories reflect the framework of the initial data collection tools it is possible that items may appear where they are not expected. As well, I will be able to see across a paragraph and notice multiple codings and compare.

The experiential grid is designed to magnify the lived experience of the actors within the organisational activities they experience, making those experiences visible to the researcher. So the categories of the experiential grid help capture the experience, talk, and environment of the actor as he or she perceives it.

While not relying formally on discourse analysis, its emphasis on ‘communication in context’ was helpful in developing an eye for the presence of situated meanings as well as the difference between narrative and non-narrative speech or sequential and hierarchical (Georgakopoulou and Dionysis 1997, viii, 69-72; Gee 1999, 80). The linguistic character of field data is most obvious in the case of texts and interviews, and we take from Wittgenstein that the meaning of a word is largely derived from its use (Silverman 1993, 115). Also the meaning never resides in a single term (Silverman 1993, 75). Beyond the linguistic side of the discourse, Stalker reminds us, that the ‘narratives the researcher hears are not simply individual endeavours but social ones’ where we ‘present ourselves to another’ and so they are constructed, a performance if you will, and ‘performances have functions’ (Stalker 2010, 31-32). The self that the respondent presents is constantly being formed and this process is happening in the interactive process with the researcher (Meier 2010, 584).

The researcher’s grid highlights unusual data and rates data related to the hypotheses.

Coding and other analysis continue until the data has been ‘saturated’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985 and Strauss 1987 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 62).

The second level of codes help to make visible things like patterns and eventually help in developing conceptual models. Here Kaplan reminds us that we are looking for ‘repeatable regularities,’ and a more theoretical and conceptual picture of the data (Kaplan 1964 cited in Huberman and Miles 1994, 69)). I am looking in two directions, out to see what larger concept or configuration the data may be a part of, and in, to see

the small noting the individual parts of something. Still Huberman and Miles (1994, 72) note that pattern coding is based on ‘hunches.’

The effort is to begin to think of a synthesized approach that allows me to analyse the parts in a way that does not obscure the whole (Huberman and Miles 1994, 177). Level three codes, then, potentially emerge from the analysis done through level one and two.

4.12 Summary

In seeking possible solutions to why churches specifically, and organisations in general have difficulty implementing and sustaining empowering cultures I have chosen the case study as an appropriate methodology. It can provide an in depth understanding of a single social phenomenon through multiple data sources explaining holistically the dynamics in a certain historical period of particular social units.

While generalisation based on traditional representativeness cannot be claimed, even the question of ‘what goes on here’ requires some theoretical suggestion even if further validation through additional research is necessary. Using Vaughan’s model of theory elaboration, theory is used not in the strict sense but in regard to theoretical tools such as models and concepts that may require further validation through additional research. Vaughan’s method involves sequential case analysis from multiple methods of data collection with feedback to the original theoretical ideas, modifying them with each successive case.

The cases chosen for study were a for-profit, a non-profit and a church organisation, each of similar size regarding full-time staff. Further, there is a tacit question of whether empowering in a church setting requires a different social structure.

The additional cases give further data on whether there are similar principles at work in other social structures of this size. All three cases do share many similar internal functions like decision-making, social change, and communication. Never the less they have differing philosophical bases.

Data collection was done using five instruments, two surveys, individual interviews with a feedback feature, focus groups, and primary leader interviews in an effort to fully understand the participant's unique experiences and unique ways of defining the world. I sought for a minimum of fifty percent participation.

Processes involved conducting pre-determined protocol in a way that diminishes unwarranted and unnecessary influence into what already cannot be a pristine process. Ethical considerations followed standard categories of concern and were protected by an extensive effort at being transparent about process and purpose, while assuring respondents that they possessed authority at any time to question or withdraw. Prior to consenting every participant received an extensive description of the purposes and processes of the research including potential time involvement.

Data was analysed using a coding system and features of Vaughan's theory elaboration model.

CHAPTER FIVE
A STUDY OF THREE CASES
A FOR-PROFIT, A NON-PROFIT AND A CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

This research involves three case studies, namely a for-profit, a church, and a non-profit. Each case is a small to medium size organisation with approximately fifteen to twenty-five employees. All three organisations are west of the Mississippi River. I employed questionnaires and interviews of differing types as primary data collection tools.

I am aware that with one of each type this makes any firm generalisation impossible. However, if certain patterns or traits are found to exist in similar ways in three different organisational types it may suggest that the differences in the organisation are not essential barriers to particular empowerment applications. This would perhaps open up fresh avenues of research.

It is my intention to use features of theory elaboration, explained in my case study methodology section in analysis and interpretation. In keeping with this model, I will use the first case to suggest a potential theory and then will adjust it with each additional case analysis and interpretation.

I will report the data analysis and interpretation for each case giving background to the case. The data will be reported within the context of this hypothesis, that there are traits and processes that are part of and even essential for an empowering environment to function and that these traits and processes include a particular approach by leadership in

the organisation. Both the traits and processes, and the leadership actions are observable. A third part of the hypotheses is that for an empowerment environment to function, there are particular traits, qualities or conditions that must exist prior to the implementation of an empowerment strategy or the strategy becomes very susceptible to deterioration. And finally, that there are benefits to individuals and the organization in having an empowering environment.

For ethical reasons I have chosen to anonymise the organisations and people involved throughout the research process and in the reporting and analysis. Since I am not exploring the variable of gender I decided it was best not highlighted.

The following comments regarding survey, interview, and focus group results represent the expressed perceptions of the respondents.

In the ‘individual interviews’ sections and the ‘CEO interviews’ sections the views expressed are those of the respondents. A view is only attributable to the researcher if he has explicitly identified himself as the source of a particular statement.

5.2 Case one, for-profit

5.2.1 Case description

This case is a single-owner enterprise approximately twenty-five years old, with the founder still owner and CEO. It is in a larger metro area and functions in a particularly volatile industry. There have been three systemic issues in the near present with which the organisation has had to deal, the economic downturn which has particularly hit this industry and resulted in lay-offs, a new software system used

throughout the organisation which has solved some problems and created others, and a new compensation package which has created a significant measure of unrest. A unique feature of this enterprise is the overt though gracious Christian commitment of the owner. While it does not appear that employees feel any pressure related to the owners personal beliefs it can be said that it results in things like prayer before company meals, Christian ministry activities like a personal finances seminar being offered free to employees, and a clear link between the owner's faith and ethical decisions made in the organization with the perception of employees that this link is a good thing. There were seven participants, the CEO, two from management, two from production, and two from support.

5.2.2 Confirmation questionnaire

Each of the five Likert scale responses was given a number value from one to five. I viewed the scoring from three angles. In angle one, the numbers of each respondent were simply added up and divided by thirteen, the number of questions, giving an average answer for the entire case of 4.08. Second, individual average ranged from 3.91 to 4.53. Third, individual answers were compared to see if there was one or more questions that a significant number scored low. It was not deemed that there was any significant disconnect between the CEO's assertion that the company did have some features of an empowering environment and was aspiring to be empowering.

5.2.3 Organisational dynamics questionnaire

5.2.3.1 Leadership

Four activities that leadership/management are regularly involved in give a glimpse into the the value system of leadership. It was noted by employees that even in a season of economic downturn, the owner decided that the company could perform better with a different company wide software system and so invested in that system. That reflected a value in appropriate and high quality tools, a theme that arises repeatedly. Second, even when the company was trying to find ways to cut expenses it maintained a number of usual events that impact employee morale like the company picnic, showing a value placed on the employees. A third feature was regular performance reviews with improvement plans and follow up on those plans, showing a value on performance. A final activity of management is a regular review with employees of the mission, vision, and values of the organization, which reflects an inclusive, team perspective as well as a commitment to the vision and values of the organization.

All six respondents see the leadership as possessing a good understanding of the industry, displaying high levels of competence and all respondents said that the owner uses power wisely.

It was noted that occasionally top management can seem to function with some degree of inflexibility and that the owner likes to believe good ideas come from him or her, but these comments notwithstanding, there is a high confidence in the wise decision-making skills of management who are also perceived to be very accessible.

These comments reflect a balance between management's concern for good performance and company success and the personal welfare of the employee. These goals are not seen to be in conflict.

It became obvious that one employee was less content than the others and a closer look at the answers suggests that this employee may have a supervisor more acclimated to reprimand than others in management.

5.2.3.2 Motivation, Performance and Reward

While it was obvious that there is a high confidence in leadership and that those in leadership care about their employees as well as caring about performance, this did not translate into high quality training. Five of six respondents scored good training as occasionally or lower. Thus, while there appears to be very clear performance expectations, an organized well thought out training model does not seem to be present. This may be in part because the person who for some time was in charge of training felt that in this industry most of it had to be learned on the job like a child learning how to ride a bike. This may be problematic because the owner hires for character and being a quick thinker first, and experience and skill are further down on his or her list, so there may be a disconnect here. It might be more bothersome to employees if it were not that management seems to be accessible, generally supportive, and people of good character.

It was obvious that despite the general goodwill, employees do pay attention to pay scales. Some discomfort with the pay scales may be in part due to the general economic conditions and the inability of the organisation to give raises.

5.2.3.3 Communication

Across the board, communication was considered to occur at healthy levels. Even though there was an admission that occasionally lines of communication within the department are not followed and some changes that effect everyone are not always communicated in a clear and timely manner, never the less, employees believe they have a very good picture of the goals of their departments, that their supervisor welcomes discussion and that the owner functions in a nonthreatening and open manner. It may be that communication up the ladder and initiated by the employee happens better than communication down the ladder from management.

There was some feeling that occasionally changes initiated from management occurred without consultation, though it must be said that in some cases management may believe those are their decisions.

5.2.3.4 Decision-making

Two features appear to be occurring within this organisational reality. While employees have a high level of confidence in management and their ability to make wise decisions, how they make them is occasionally questioned. For example, three respondents thought that only seldom or occasionally are decisions made with the appropriate involvement of others, and three felt that the decisions were implemented in an orderly way only occasionally while four believed that decisions were only occasionally made in accordance with the formal structure. Yet five said they were always welcome to share their ideas.

This data may suggest nothing more sinister than an entrepreneurial owner who has not taken the time to generate an organised way of making decisions and may not feel the need given the size of the organisation. Management does meet regularly to review organisational realities and make decisions together. A major decision that reveals this disconnect is the decision to purchase and implement a company wide software tool, a decision made without input from one of the supervisors who oversees all the financial aspects of the organisation and whose department would be significantly impacted by this tool. A company with a predisposition to act will occasionally act prior to ensuring all the stakeholders have had an opportunity to weigh in. It is also clear however, that employees feel the values of the owner show through in the decision-making process, so that the stated values are not just nice words. This owner's follow through is seen to reflect consistency and credibility.

One employee suggested that there are times those around the water-cooler believe they have some good ideas but do not share them, feeling that it would either not be acted on or that it would just create more change, of which they have had enough.

5.2.3.5 Conflict

The organisation and management scored very positively in this area. There was only one answer as low as 'occasionally' out of thirty answers. The scores and comments suggest that the employees do not feel they are abused, that blame is associated with problem solving, that there are informal groups that conspire or make decisions and no one is afraid of those in authority. Even during the stressful times of the economic downturn management was seen as functioning in a fair, even-handed and even gentle

way, in the midst of significant instability. Management was perceived as working ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with everyone else and other employees were seen as behaving in professional and courteous ways.

Perhaps the only criticism here was that occasionally management would act a little too slowly.

5.2.3.6 Group cohesion

The Issues of being personally valued and group belonging were strong behavioural traits in all five question areas. Employees feel very supported and valued. Here there seems to be a sequence. The reason they feel valued is not primarily because of some personal relationship but rather because they are invited to the table, their opinion requested, their perspectives on a problem sought. They are asked to contribute and given tasks or responsibilities. This reality translates into trust, in the mind of the employee, and because they feel trusted they feel valued. So the sequence goes from being asked to contribute that feeds a sense of being trusted which in turn produces a feeling of being valued. Thus, there is a connection between the invitation to participate and the sense of being valued, with trust serving as a bridge.

5.2.4 Individual interviews

5.2.4.1 Interview one, notable features

This respondent likes his or her job very much and uses the word ‘fun’ to describe it. The respondent believes that structure can ‘force’ certain behaviours like impacting

self-motivation. A strong team is seen as essential to organisational success and he or she believes his or her own fortunes are tied to the success and strength of the team. This view of team reflects a positive view of people as assets. Flexibility is seen as essential, allowing the organisation to adjust and stay with, and even narrow, the focus to what is working and make other changes that reflect organisational 'freedom.' The respondent's precise idea of what is needed to succeed includes access to potential clients, good tools and a high performance company that is prepared to follow through on essential tasks. According to the respondent, what is needed to thrive requires the 'desire' to sell, product competency, confidence, a good process, healthy evaluation and the ability to learn on the job. Leadership traits needed for empowering people begins with trusting people and the biggest leadership barrier to empowering others is the ego of the leader.

Competency is highly valued and a sense of accomplishment feeds the feeling of impact, because good performance keeps others working. If the organisation is to thrive then people need a voice and the organisation must be listening. People need to feel 'vested' in the business as well as carry a sense of accountability and responsibility including evaluation. The organisation and people need to be goal oriented and make change only when it is warranted. It is also true that people watch how other people in the organisation are treated and use that information in evaluating management.

If a person is empowered it contributes to their financial security, personal growth, social abilities within the team setting and a variety of opportunities and responsibilities. The organisation benefits through increased productivity, training that results in a broader utility of the worker, increased trust and diversity that generates increased opportunity.

The respondent was immediate in answering the question of a time of personal disempowerment, noting a previous work setting, while serving at a level of leadership where due in part to having a stock equity position in the company of less than fifty percent, the respondent's views were not given fair consideration.

3.2.4.2 Interview two, notable features

The sense of 'place' felt in the organisation as part of a strong team supported by management was an important feature to this respondent. The respondent responds positively to appreciation and gets satisfaction through solving problems and seeing and hearing the appreciation from others in response. This is one reason the respondent comes in to work very early. The respondent feels the organisation values team and fun, has no fear in using the chain of command for input or questions, and is not afraid of making a bad decision. When responsibility is increased and he or she is allowed to make decisions it solidifies the respondent's sense of being trusted.

Because of the impact of good decisions and the appreciation that is expressed, the respondent feels he or she has a voice. It is the respondent's opinion that companies fail in empowerment efforts because of fear, so if there is a 'hiccup,' instead of just fixing it, leadership quickly returns to the way it was before. In contrast, leadership at this company is open to change and truly 'walk the talk.' As a consequence, confident of the character of management the respondent said that the CEO 'won't hurt me.' This feeling of safety is in part due to observing that the stated values of the organisation consistently impact decisions.

When asked about a disempowering experience, the respondent answered quickly, noting a previous job in a large organisation, where he or she and others had no voice. It didn't matter what an employee's opinion was, it was not going to get 'up the ladder' to anyone who could act on it.

The respondent highlighted efficiency and performance as personal benefits of working in an empowering culture. An organisation was benefited by high performance and good reputation, which will eventually impact the bottom line.

5.2.4.3 Interview three, notable features

Respondent three noted the importance of being trusted 'to take care of things.' The respondent was highly responsive to features in the culture that focused on commitment to goals and execution but also magnified the importance of receiving appreciation and the pleasure of working in relationships with peers and management who all share common goals. This size of organisation that feels more 'family' size, is appealing to the respondent who has no fear of approaching a superior with suggestions or questions as long as adequate homework has been done on the issue. A positive atmosphere and a sense of place are important. Micromanaging is seen as disruptive and contrary to being honored for competency and a pride in performance noted by self and the organisation.

Despite the obvious commitment to goal achievement and quality performance, the respondent notes the weakness in training. Though prior to the economic downturn employees could take classes paid for by the company, the respondent saw a weakness in training employees even though there is an emphasis on goal achievement and quality

performance. With one department that needs to be available around the clock by phone, no structural adjustments were made so that members of that department could attend training events. As well, 'standards of procedure are very fluid.'

Why do organisations fail to empower? It is the view of the respondent that the failure rests in the lack of synergy between the people in the company.

Leadership needs to be relational, encouraging the team, and honoring the individual strengths of people and also showing concern for their private lives. Essential to the respondent is that leadership live out their stated values and at an operational level, leaders need to give freedom within boundaries. The ideal leadership style is a middle of the road approach that allows flexibility within structure and honors individual judgment while expecting responsibility.

While not sharing the same approach to life as the owner, the respondent considers the overt faith of the owner a sign of credibility and valuing the employees. The emphasis on the personal and the professional was seen as wholesome as long as it comes with freedom to choose.

When asked to describe a disempowering event or time the respondent was quick to describe a previous work setting where the boss was cruel, abusive, and unethical. If a person is empowered they will be productive and the organisation will experience increased productivity or return on investment.

5.2.4.4 Interview four, notable features

A high regard for competency and the equally important quality of being treated with respect and supported were significant to this respondent. One might think that such

a strong statement would reflect some work experience where those traits were not present but the researcher was assured that the respondent's work experience had been very positive. It seemed sensible that if the organisation wanted to be empowering, then such a commitment should be visible in the hiring process. Respect for the chain of command even with an open door policy is important as well as a team culture where people help each other. The respondent is always aware of the freedom to communicate up the chain but observed that a suggestion that needed to be referred sometimes got lost, noting that there was top down change and bottom up feedback. The respondent felt that people who were involved could make a difference.

He or she felt they had a great boss who was supportive, handled things in a timely manner, showed appreciation and openness, and stood up for those in his or her department. The respondent did not feel the style of leadership was particularly important but leading by example and showing respect were not negotiable. If employees did not have voice or people were micromanaged then empowerment efforts were threatened.

If an empowerment environment was sustained then the employee would be happy and the organisation would experience increased productivity.

5.2.4.5 Interview five, notable features

The respondent is able to be responsive and efficient when good tools are provided. Competency is valued in a rapidly changing industry. This respondent believes that his or her strength is communicating with the client and the joy of working with people.

The respondent thrives when respected and trusted. Presently, though rhetoric highlights ‘we trust you,’ in his or her department the message is ‘don’t make a mistake.’ The respondent also laments the lack of training, weak standards of procedure, and a lack of voice.

According to the perception of the respondent, management was trying to remove barriers between departments, increase teamwork and those things were having some success. Yet it appears that leadership is accessible and that one can speak freely but respectfully. The respondent felt that the top trait for a leader is a ‘servant heart’ and the reason organisations are not successful in empowering is the fear of letting go. Empowerment comes from the top. He or she notes that the three managers have three different styles not all impacting employees the same.

In an empowering environment the individual can experience increased confidence, working without fear, and the awareness that upper management believes in them. An empowering culture frees management to focus on top level issues.

5.2.4.6 Interview six, notable features

The constant change that is part of this industry is appealing to this respondent and he or she looks for individuals who are not afraid to make a decision in this fluid environment. Tools, adequate guidance, and being a good listener are essential for high productivity. The respondent is energized by aggressive, risk-taking, goal-setting people.

This respondent also feels that personnel go through a training period of over a year.

A good leader provides access and builds trust. Further, an empowering supervisor is a balancing act like teaching one's children to drive. If the leader is empowering they will like being around people who are growing. Change should be through group decisions as much as possible and a goal of this respondent is to be approachable and see people flourish without input by the respondent.

Why do some organisations fail at empowerment? One possibility is that only smaller groups can empower. An empowering environment must enable people to make decisions, develop relationships, build good teams, give freedom with accountability, and intentionally limit advice.

The person in an empowering environment experiences increased self-worth while the organization experiences increased creativity.

The respondent considers the death of his or her spouse to be the most disempowering moment in life resulting in depression and even mental confusion.

5.2.5 Focus group synopsis

The focus group was comprised of four people, two each from production and support. It was the consensus that appreciation is a normal if varying part of the work culture and that it results in increased morale. It was noted that in the middle of the present compensation adjustments one particular department is facing discouragement.

The management style is supportive and leaders go out of their way to help and make work easier. This is part of an over-all team environment, though not all managers were equally as affirming or supportive. And while the new compensation program has caused some consternation it was agreed that it has created a greater sense of team.

The group became animated over the topic of communicating for competence. They noted numerous small incidents where information did not get to them in a timely fashion and how it impacted them. The responses focused on how the communication breakdown impacts their appearance of competency, for example, forwarding a customer to a person who is out all week. The animated nature of the discussion did not suggest how pervasive the problem was, but rather how important the issue was to them.

Communication for belonging did not revolve around warm personal issues but rather around issues of professional situations. They highlighted how one manager would get back to them about the progress within management of an idea they had come up with and how getting information that is not required makes them feel like part of the team. Within this discussion one person noted that they had been trying for weeks to get one line changed on a billing form that fundamentally would affect no one but this one person, and still it was not done. So in this regard it was not that they did not feel like they had voice but rather an example of how slow the system sometimes works.

What creates trust? When a supervisor does what they say they will do. When a supervisor supports their employee. When an employee can communicate to the supervisor without any fear of threat. The employee trusts the supervisor because the supervisor trusts the employee. Trust means the employee is entrusted with responsibilities and freedom. Am I trusted to do my job? Am I free to make decisions? If so I will be more productive and not afraid. A lack of trust slows down decisions and creates uncertainty. If the employee is given responsibility and then allowed to do it, that is trust. Responsibility and trust go together.

Confidence in leadership is based, in part, on the leader fighting for what they believe in. When they show competency and respect competency, do not act but ask when they do not know and communicate that they understand the reality of those they supervise, this builds confidence.

In this organisation each employee is asked to complete a personal mission and vision statement. It is their view that most managers understand their people well. Beyond that they are moved to work hard when they see managers and leaders sacrifice. They described two instances when they knew leaders were behaving sacrificially.

It was the view of the focus group that empowerment is determined by the boss.

5.2.6 CEO interview

The CEO loves the job, the pressure, the rapid change, thinking on his or her feet. He or she hires based first on character and the ability to think quickly and not on experience or skills. He or she will ask questions like, 'How are you similar to and different than your parents?'

For the organisation to be productive it needs a hands-off leader with a positive view of people and good processes. For employees to be productive they need a mentor not a micro-manager and a leader who would prefer to err on the side of freedom though this CEO feels his or her company may err on the side of making choices for people. This leader believes empowerment is hardwired into a person, that they aspire to grow mentally, to experience opportunity, to make money and move forward. A person is 'useless if not making decisions.' The metaphor of raising kids and making decisions for them is considered appropriate. Unless the desire to aspire has been damaged by some

life experience it is normal, and the desire for empowerment should be encouraged. True, it must be balanced with boundaries but it is there.

The company benefits by the unleashing of creative energy, better problem-solving, better at fulfilling customer expectations, and better at making decisions. Yet the organisation may not be successful in an empowering strategy because the leader must embrace it absolutely and that commitment is tantamount and must be communicated in ‘thousands of ways.’ Yet many leaders want to hang on out of fear. Empowerment is also held down by cultures where failure is not an option rather than teaching people how to work with failure. The leader must model empowerment values. The leader illustrated by using a significant initiative that he or she was behind and had a vested interest in, yet after implementation, it became obvious that many features were unfair and so rather than retreating he or she called in personnel and asked them to describe what was wrong with the program.

The CEO sees appreciation as vital and uses many little things to communicate this. While the respondent has no formal feedback loop, he or she tries to give people voice and takes the initiative in seeking feedback believing that a leader must keep his or her word to be trusted. If they keep their word, when they make a mistake, the employees give the leader space.

The CEO changed when the respondent’s primary business partner left and he or she was better able to step into their own style and values. Structure changed behaviour.

The courage for honest evaluation, goal achievement and transparency are also important leadership features.

The leader's game is energized by being able to just talk about empowerment. The leader is a constant learner using books, tapes and other means to improve. This leader learned how to elevate the opinion of self and also servanthood through these tools. Empowerment is in all of us. We cannot prove profitability through empowerment and it will not guarantee success if the business plan does not make economic sense. It is rather about satisfaction in life, about honor and respect and voice.

5.2.7 Case one synopsis

Data from the case study in the for-profit organisation suggests a number of internal, structural, yet for the most part invisible dimensions of an empowering culture. Empowerment is a transactional construct. These transactions are constantly happening, within people, between people, and between people and systems. It is dynamic not static, subject to movement, expansion, reduction, balanced and out of balance, and with both incremental and substantive movement. In the present organisational climate where people move often and economic considerations force action, many organisations are in a constant state of flux. This, along with the invisible nature of much of empowerment, makes measuring and assessing the strength of empowerment's presence in a social structure very difficult to understand. This makes research precision important.

I entered this case with four research questions related to leadership, pre-conditions, traits and processes, and perceived benefits. I will use those categories to analyse and generate a possible scenario of relationship. Beyond that, I am using a research methodology of theory elaboration, so I will generate a potential theoretical concept from the first case that will be tested, and adjusted with the additional two cases.

5.2.7.1 Pre-conditions

Pre-conditions are those aspects that need to be present for empowerment to have a footing. Like the soil and climate that is inviting to a particular type of crop, I suggest that even before an organisation endeavors to implement an empowerment strategy certain features may need to be present. It is my assumption that without these pre-conditions the soil is not ready and the effort will be intentionally or unintentionally sabotaged. I suggest that the preliminary data from the first case suggests that there may be three pre-conditions. The first is the pre-condition of a particular view of persons. Inherent in the logistics of empowerment is the transaction of not simply delegating but rather entrusting something that matters to someone else, not only for their benefit or development, but because ultimately it will be best for the organization. This is not based on a skill assessment of one individual but a fundamental view of persons. This view of persons as articulated by the CEO and employees includes at least three traits: that persons naturally, unless life choices and experiences have damaged this quality, aspire and have capacity towards improvement, quality performance, and place and visibility. For example, communication for competency or communication and information that a person needs to do a job well was a repeated focus many respondents. This animation did not particularly speak to whether their particular organisation was failing in this area, for other data would suggest that generally the organisation was not. Rather, it spoke to how important the employee viewed this type of communication when weighed with their desire to perform well and be seen as competent by management and peers. Since fear was not particularly strong in the workplace, this desire to be seen as competent was not

driven by fear, but rather the value of being seen as someone who does quality work. There are many in management who would consider this an anomaly coupled with their conviction that unless herded and driven employees are inclined to laziness and look for ways to reduce responsibility.

Another quality is the desire to improve. Inherent in empowerment is mobility. If a person is given responsibility and handles it wisely, in all likelihood they will be given more responsibility measured by more work and perhaps a change in position. The view that persons naturally yearn to improve, are aware that they have shortcomings they want to erase or diminish and that they have capacities they want to tap, is not just a trait of the well-educated, because a considerable part of this workforce is not highly educated. A last trait in a list not meant to be exhaustive is that persons desire to have place or visibility. This trait is not simply about being heard but about being at the table, a welcomed part of the team and seen as such. This view is in contradiction to the view that people simply work in order to get money or to play. It is connected to self-actualization and being, that recognition includes place and relationship.

A second pre-condition may be related to flexibility. This suggests that in many settings there is more than one way to do something effectively. Perhaps in rapidly changing scenarios flexibility is a necessary response that allows persons to make choices creating both intended and unintended consequences that are generally seen as good. An environment of flexibility keeps energy in the organisation as long as there are intentional and reasoned boundaries and flexibility is connected to a particular view of people as previously articulated. Why is flexibility a pre-condition rather than simply a trait of empowerment? Because when organisations develop particular patterns those patterns,

even if not effective, tend to develop a life of their own and are sustained because someone has a vested interest in a certain way of doing things, and because even neurologically doing something repeatedly develops ruts in the brain that cause a person to default to such a pattern. So ingrained is this reality that people involved in helping organisations change suggest that it takes three to seven years to change the culture of an organisation. The invisibility of some of this makes it even more problematic to deal with. Without a pre-condition of flexibility many efforts towards empowerment will be met with a barrier that raises the cost of the initiative to a place that leadership will consider too high. Flexibility is not about having no boundaries but about increasing options within a framework. It requires a particular view of reality and faces the issue of control that exists in every organisation. It trades certainty for energy and personal growth. It considers the potential negative side of higher flexibility to be less than the negative side of excessive control.

The third pre-condition is related to the leader. It is the view of the CEO of this case that leader support and modeling of this goal is central and ‘tantamount.’ Interestingly, empowerment and other change efforts are often sabotaged by the very persons that initiated them as they discover that the implications run deeper than they had anticipated. For the organisation to know that this support will not change cannot be simply verbal. Something visible must be recurring that communicates to others that this approach to execution within the organization is fundamentally linked to the DNA of the leader and the leader cannot lead in any other way and be true to self.

5.2.7.2 Traits and processes

All organisations have traits and processes. The test here is not simply to identify traits and processes that an empowering organisation seems to possess, but rather to suggest a synergy among particular traits and processes that produce an organisational impact different from the impact of an individual trait or process. For example many organisations work at showing appreciation and believe that it has a by-product that is good for the employee and organization. One could argue that appreciation is one dimension of an empowering organisation but an organisation may not be empowering simply because it shows appreciation.

The data from case one suggests that the emphasis in this section will not be on processes but traits that eventually produce processes. I suggest four traits that seem to exist in a relational context. The traits are connectivity, trust, voice, and authentication.

Connectivity has as a foundation the belief that I cannot succeed without you or others, that the quality of my success is linked with the quality of your success, and that your involvement in my enterprise enriches my enterprise and increases its chances of success. There are at least three traits in this connectivity, namely, being ‘supportive,’ giving ‘access,’ and showing ‘appreciation.’ Each one was mentioned from multiple vantage points, and multiple needs. At a pragmatic level I support others because I know my enterprise is linked with them. I give accessibility because I believe my enterprise is improved by them. I show appreciation because I understand the value and want to sustain the relationship. Within the context of power this creates a power field that has mutuality even within a hierarchical model.

Trust in a variety of forms may be the most mentioned trait within the research data. One can argue that trust may mean different things to different people. Taking the word or concept within the context of its use helps me to determine if the concept shares attributes as used by the CEO and people and various levels of the organisation. Fundamentally it is a belief in three things, that another will act in a way that includes some of my interests, that they will tend to act consistently, and that they will not intentionally harm me in a way that is driven by personal deficiency. For example, as a leader I may have to lay someone off which at one level may cause them harm, but the harm is within the parameters of normal and acceptable organisational behaviour. That is very different than being demoted by a supervisor who has a friend who wants the position, as such demotion is disconnected from performance and driven by a personal agenda. Beyond that trust is seen as diminished or at risk in relation to employees when the CEO or supervisor is driven by ego, fear, or control issues resulting in their unwillingness to let go. These three traits are considered subversive to the marrying of leadership and trust. From an employee's perspective the leader is trusted for a number of reasons but the largest is that he or she follows through on what they say so there is no reasonable dissonance between speech and action. This trait allows others to position themselves, accommodating the ways of the leader while knowing that the leader will not behave in a capricious or unpredictable manner. So one employee says that he or she is sure that the leader will not intentionally hurt the respondent.

From the employees' perspective they are trusted if they are given responsibility. This act helps them know that the organization is willing to put into their hands something that the organisation cares about. Micromanaging, then, is seen as the

antithesis of trust. So the train of action goes from first, being given increased responsibility, which translates into the employee knowing he or she is valued, which translates into the employee feeling trusted.

A third trait that seems prevalent is voice. Does the employee have voice? In the hardware side of the organisational structure voice may have a specific place, for example in a feedback loop that is part of the communication system, but voice itself is a perception by one person that their perspective or reality is, first, valued, second, sought, and third, considered by someone who matters. Virtually all respondents were able to articulate a time when they felt they had something to say that would have helped the organization and such data was not sought, or was not heard by anyone who could act on it. To be heard is to be present in and to the organisation. Being present is not the same as showing up and doing a task, but rather the organisation through its systems and supervisors, functioning with an overt awareness that the employee is part of the process of success, and that their value stretches beyond immediate tasks.

The fourth and final trait that seems to be regularly present throughout the research data of this case is authentication. Authentication means that the people at multiple levels see the 'people of influence' behave in ways that are coherent with the statements about values, vision, and organisational morals. This has an impact on how employees respond to the use of power and they conclude that power need not be feared. They also conclude that on the rare occurrence when the leader or supervisor actually does not perform in an authenticating way, that such behaviour is an anomaly and not representative of a true reality or a shift. For example, when the employee pool hears the CEO say that one of the goals of the organisation is to be an empowering workplace and

they see that he or she regularly trusts others to make particular decisions and personally behaves in a manner congruent with that statement, it 'authenticates' the message and communicates that the employee is then free to behave in a way that is congruent with an empowering environment and even generates the expectation that at multiple levels behaviour will be in harmony with such a goal because the 'people of influence' are consistently behaving that way.

5.2.7.3 Leadership Traits

The third research question is whether there is a particular leadership style that is most in harmony with sustaining an empowering work environment. There were two cycles of behaviour that were highlighted in the data of this case. The first is a cycle of three features which feed off of and energize one another. One feature is that the leader 'walks the talk.' In other words everyone is determining if a particular set of stated values is actually true of the organisation on the basis of whether they see their CEO and/or supervisor display them. In this case repeated statements related to the CEO were about 'lives values,' 'walks the talk,' 'keeps his word,' and 'does what he says,' and these statements rest upon an assumption that 'empowerment comes from the top,' or 'empowerment is determined by the boss.' No amount of effort and dialogue appears to be able to dislodge the distrust that exists if the gap between discourse and performance is too wide. The employee is rather specific on the signs and reasons the gap gets too big. First, the ego of the leader is too fragile which leads secondly to a fear of letting go and thus to a third consequence of micromanaging, which reduces voice and trust among the employees. This cycle of three behaviours intersects with a second cycle of behaviours

that are part of a relational construct. The CEO, in this setting is seen as one who values relationship and thus values people. So concepts like caring for the personal lives of employees, supportive, appreciative, open, accessible, wanting information and displaying a servant attitude are all terms that suggest that the employee sees the CEO as not simply caring for the bottom line of the organisation, but seeing them as valued and behaving that way. They are not simply tools to an end, but partners in achieving. This has less to do with liking than with valuing contribution, capacity, and intention.

5.2.7.4 Benefits, personal and organisational

The final research question relates to the perceived or real benefits to the organisation and person of having an empowering work environment. The benefits to the person or employee fall easily into three categories. The first is dispositional, namely, that an empowering environment impacts the disposition of personnel so they are 'happy,' 'confident,' or gain increased 'self-worth.' The second category is direction, thus in an empowering environment the yearning people have to develop, expand personal capacity, and grow would be challenged and thus yearning would find opportunity for expression. The third category is tangible, and an empowering environment would call people not just to develop but to ultimately make more money and even achieve promotion. This category was only expressed by those who were in management or leadership.

The primary and most mentioned benefit to the organisation was higher productivity. An empowering culture was seen as one that would increase the output of personnel, in part by speeding up the processes. A second category was related to

increasing the versatility of the work force broadening their skill level in things like wise decision-making thus making the organization more nimble. A final category was creativity that relates both to problem solving as well as recognizing and exploiting opportunities.

5.2.7.5 Disempowerment

One of the more interesting features of the interviews both with management and other employees concerned the invitation to share a time when the respondent had experienced being disempowered. It was surprising how quickly the answers came and often with passion. In this case only one respondent was not able to cite a time when they had felt disempowered. In each case in which being disempowered was described it was done so in a framework of significance. No one treated it as incidental or ‘water under the bridge.’ They still carried it as if it were still alive. Both the immediacy and potency of the disempowering experiences suggest that something very fundamental had been breached or violated. And the examples cited were communicated in very personal contexts relating to not having voice, being publically embarrassed, accepting abusive treatment, and a total loss of control in a situation. At least one further conclusion that would warrant further research is the relationship between disempowering environments and employee retention.

5.2.7.6 A Theory of empowerment

The for-profit case suggests a possible empowerment theory relating to

why it is so difficult for organisations to sustain an empowering environment. The empowerment diagram in the appendix gives a visual model to the proposed theoretical concept. At the center, in making progress toward an empowering culture, are three pre-conditions that need to exist in an organisation in a reasonable dimension prior to the implementation of any empowerment strategy. These three qualities are a particular view of people that pervades the leadership and organisation, a reasonable level of flexibility in the structure impacting, for example, how decisions are made, and the top leader's full support and involvement rising from a clear understanding of how empowerment impacts an organisation. For example, with the last feature of leadership support, it is very conceivable that a leader would believe that empowerment would make the organisation more productive and thus more profitable, yet have no grasp that empowerment requires a particular view of people and a willingness to step back from micromanagement. So, if the primary leader is enormously gifted but has a fragile ego, this fragile ego may well result in an obstructionist posture when the practical aspects of an empowerment strategy are rolled out.

Out from the center are four spokes or arrows that serve like fertile soil for the four traits of empowerment to flourish. The problem with these 'fertile soil' traits is that they are hard to see and measure. The traits are connectivity, trust, voice, and authentication. Consider these software in the organisation. Note the highly relational quality of these traits. Without these the hardware qualities like decision-making protocols, formal lines of communication, and organisational hierarchy will fail to perform in empowering ways. The dilemma is obviously, that these four 'fertile soil' traits since they are software, are difficult to define, institutionalize, and measure. It is

my contention that this is a primary reason why so many organisations that aspire to have an empowering environment are not able to sustain it. They start with the four qualities of empowerment which are choice, competency, meaning, and impact and simply try to build them into the discourse and hardware structure of the organisation without taking the temperature of the pre-conditions, and the soil content of the four 'fertile soil' traits. Without this simple, yet essential foundation, in a rapidly moving business or organisational environment where the landscape in which the organisation functions is regularly changing, the empowerment strategy begins to falter and as it falters those who are trying to sustain it cannot 'see' the level at which the collapse is occurring.

Beyond the center or pre-conditions and spokes or four 'fertile soil' traits is the external hardware activities of the organisation represented by the six normal structural realities of virtually any enterprise that involves people. Here activities and patterns like formal lines of communication, decision-making, and leadership exist and function. Running through and around this hardware structure of the organisation are the four qualities of empowerment, choice, competency, meaning, and impact. The arrow shape of the external realities suggests the forward movement or benefits of the empowering organization.

Now using this model, within the framework of theory elaboration, I will relate the data from the next case study, and then apply that data in a confirming or adjusting way to this theoretical concept.

5.3 Case two, non-profit

5.3.1 Case description

This case is an independent religious educational institution, approximately fifty years old with a total employee base of approximately twenty. It is in a large metro area. After a period of decline it has recently shown distinction in its ability to renew itself in industry stature, financial stability, and student body size. The institution has a new primary leader within the last three years. It has weathered the economic downturn in good condition. In a relatively conservative industry that finds making profit difficult, this institution has become financially viable without any sizeable financial endowment and in an industry that tends to move slowly it has become known for rapid and innovative change. That it is part of a larger institution, is a second unique feature. There were eleven respondents or approximately half of the employee base representing the three levels of support, product, and management/leadership.

5.3.2 Confirmation questionnaire

The average response of respondents was 4.23 on a Likert scale with answers weighted from one to five. The average per respondent ranged from 4.76 to 3.23. Except for the unusual average of the lowest respondent all responses ranged between 4.76 and 4.07. It was deemed that the low score of one respondent was related to being under challenged after much broader management experience. Otherwise there seemed to be no distinctive variation that would lead to a conclusion in contradiction to the statements of the CEO that in fact the institution does aspire to being an empowering place to work.

5.3.3 Organisational dynamics questionnaire

5.3.3.1 Leadership

The confirmation survey shows that employees feel that they have considerable flexibility in deciding and fulfilling their responsibilities, yet the score for leadership flexibility shows six respondents perceiving leaders as occasionally inflexible and two consider leadership usually inflexible. All other questions showed scores that reflected a healthy leadership model. Four of nine respondents chose to comment on question two related to the leader's responsiveness to input and 'having a clear understanding of organizational vision,' was another favoured question on which to comment.

Respondent reflections show a mixed response regarding the responsiveness of leadership, some positive and some negative, and connected to it was the issue of change and follow through. Answers ranged of 'open to new ideas' to 'nothing changed' to a 'very recently has been a course correction.' This may reflect that this institution is part of a larger institution which results in a consider amount of bureaucracy and constraint. In three of the four statements on vision, the respondents felt they had a very good understanding of institutional vision.

5.3.3.2 Motivation, performance and reward

Of the nine who added comments five chose to comment on question two dealing with training as a priority and six commented on question five related to reward for performance. Four of the five comments on training reflected an organisation that was

underperforming in this area. Training is seen as sometimes ‘haphazard,’ ‘not always provided,’ and ‘never worked anywhere where there is less.’ And the consensus on rewards suggests that while they are committed to their present organisation, respondents are aware they ‘could do better’ elsewhere.

5.3.3.3 Communication

All questions show very high scores in communication with the exception of the question on how change that affects the respondent is communicated where four of nine who wrote additional comments say that this type of communication occurs seldom or only occasionally. Never the less the overall score includes six of ten remarking that such communication usually occurs. Five of nine chose to comment on question four that refers to satisfactory communication with immediate supervisor and four of the five spoke in affirming ways about how the respondent and supervisor work out communication issues. The final respondent suggested that the supervisor wanted only confirming information about previously held views.

5.3.3.4 Decision-making

Perhaps most notable is that of the ten respondents who made additional comments, which comments totaled eighteen, twelve of the comments were about having ‘voice,’ being heard and a high expectation that that should be the norm. It may be possible in a very professional setting where credentials are an important part of status, the issue of ‘voice’ increases in importance. Phrases like ‘behind closed doors,’ ‘always top down,’ and ‘then ignored,’ are contrasted with ‘the team enjoys hearing my thoughts

and ideas.’ Twice mention was made of the protective feature of a formal structure. There seemed to be some disconnect between the Likert scale answers which showed no answer below ‘occasionally’ and only six answers in total even citing ‘occasionally,’ and the comments which suggest a modest level of discontent in this area.

5.3.3.5 Conflict

From both the scores and comments it is obvious that on-going personal and professional conflict is not a part of this work culture nor would it be accepted regardless of the views held. In short, the data suggests that the issues are almost never allowed to overwhelm personal considerations. Phrases like ‘fighting fairly,’ ‘supervisors care about workers as people first and employees second,’ and ‘conflicts have been consistently resolved,’ are the norm. The high rating the respondents give in this area also suggests they feel a high level of freedom to address conflict. They are aware that the organisation will view their efforts positively and personnel believe they have an adequate level of skill to act in this area. It may be argued that this skill of addressing conflict as well as the low tolerance for un-resolved conflict is related to the religious values of the culture, but many religious cultures, for example, individual churches, are famous for continuous conflict.

5.3.3.6 Group cohesion

Both in the Likert scale responses where only two answers even dropped as low as occasionally, and in regard to essay questions, respondent answers suggest their personal view of group cohesion is that it is very strong. Questions chosen most for

additional comments were six of ten on the question of trust, and five of ten on solving problems as a group. Five of six who commented on trust made comments that were positive on the level of trust. Most saw group problem solving as a value even though in a number of comments throughout the second questionnaire there was an understanding that most major decisions came from the top down. In regard to trust it was seen as gained by personal development and confidence, dependability, and such a view was supported by receiving affirmation.

5.3.4 Individual interviews

5.3.4.1 Interview one, notable features

The respondent was articulate in describing both self and surrounding reality. The respondent described work in terms of quality relationships that help people grow thus showing a particular view of people, that they have capacity and desire to grow and that this happens in a relational construct. As an example, the respondent cited how a particular person's belief in the respondent which resulted in a new opportunity for the respondent, was a primary energizing relationship. This led to a description of an environment where people grow. Such an environment values relationality, competence, shared values, and high responsibility. Interestingly, the respondent noted that while it was assumed that maturity increased a person's relational skills, increased maturity also increases the amount of work to sustain healthy relationships, because those with increased maturity are more willing to set personal boundaries, express themselves even

if in disagreement, and in general take responsibility for their own course, making team building and cooperative enterprise more work intensive.

The respondent reflected on changing leadership in the organisation and differences of leadership style, noting that he or she was more drawn to the style of high accessibility, team-building, and where the leader makes their thinking visible. This was in contrast to a different leader noted by the respondent who was highly innovative with less accessibility and visibility in thinking.

Considering traits of an empowering environment the respondent noted a need for a secure leader who could laugh at their own mistakes, high accessibility, an atmosphere of trust where people could be transparent, provide high visibility, having 'frank conversations' without fear, and where it was fun to be together as a team. Trust was seen as an essential feature for people to thrive. Inhibiting traits were a hit and miss process of communication, development, and accessibility. Included in the portrait of an empowering leader is one who is seen as being on a journey, growing and changing. This process gives others both security and motivation. The respondent noted that gender plays some part in how people take relational space.

The respondent was very quick to articulate situations of personal disempowerment. The primary example was of being repeatedly blindsided which brought into focus the feeling of not being really known and a belief that others and leaders do not know the person's reality. The loss includes the inability to speak which isolates and causes confusion as to whether others value the person at their core.

Being empowered benefits the individual by helping them to feel like they are known and thus trusted. It generates the ability to live without undue fear of failure and

this contributes to the power to imagine within the context of receiving affirmation. In the organization there is a move beyond self to ‘pulling together,’ speaking honestly, a willingness of employees to invest more heavily in the organisation without the need to expend energy in protecting self.

The influence and disposition of leadership makes a relational setting fertile soil for empowerment. While consensus is important in such a setting, it must be energized by a leader who ‘accurately represents their options to the next level.’ In this setting there must be leader intentionality in dealing with any individual who continually trips up the team out of their own dysfunction.

Why do organisations have trouble sustaining empowering culture? Because of competing agendas at different levels which magnifies the possibility of breaking down trust. In reflection of leadership styles, inclusion generates trust and fun. And further, people need to feel or ‘experience’ trust to know how infectious it is.

Change efforts need to include tracking progress which communicates to personnel that a particular thing matters to the larger organisation.

5.3.4.2 Interview two, notable features

The respondent is motivated by knowing that efforts made by the respondent have impact and that those efforts help others develop in identifiable ways. A strength of the work environment is diversity which implies an open, inclusive setting that appreciates and values the views of persons and requires a high value be put on dialogue. The greatest frustration in the work environment is not around values or perspectives but administrative logistics.

There is a need for a working structure that limits surprises and constant change, where expectations are clear and the structure is dependable but 'loosely worn.' An over dependence of a consensus decision-making process that has the unintended consequence of magnifying passive-aggressive behaviour and actually results in over structuring administration systems is an inhibiting factor in an organisation. The respondent notes, this is not friendly to innovation, increasing the price of innovation.

The respondent was able to quickly identify a disempowering experience citing a major institutional change where the respondent was responsible for significant aspects of implementation, but denied crucial information and frozen out of any dialogue until a crisis occurred. This decrease in information flow, the absence of stakeholders, and hidden agendas resulted in blind decisions, personal and relational devastation and a huge loss of trust. Noting that change is often not smooth, it is important to have people participating who can see the second and third levels of implications in decisions. The respondent resists a simplistic evaluation of what is useful or necessary such as using only bottom line financial conclusions.

Noting a change in leadership, the respondent remarked that the present leader builds empowerment through giving latitude to accomplish tasks, while the leader's predecessor used a relational model to empower. This respondent flourishes in the former. The ability to recognize creativity and capacity in others is central to the task of leadership. Other desirable traits for empowerment include the primacy of communicating with integrity, the ability of the leader to produce, a leadership style that is not threatening and thus friendly to creativity, and the recognition that goals must be given structure for their success. If the organisation wants a particular thing it must

create relationships, information flow, decision-making processes and budgeting, for that thing to happen. Just as critical as the ability to recognize talent is a leader doing what he or she says so there is little gap between rhetoric and action.

An empowering environment needs imagination and good ideas must get supported so those in the institution see that there is a cultural value placed on creativity and imagination by virtue of the ideological, administrative, and appreciative energy behind creativity. The respondent noted that people are not energized by an institution but by things they are passionate about and joyous over and the institution champions this.

The respondent works with others cultures and highlighted a transferrable trait of valuing the voice of others, suggesting that much of Western leadership models are paternalistic.

5.3.4.3. Interview three, notable features

Joy in the job arises from the relational construct of hearing people's stories particularly of how they ended up at this institution often through miraculous means. Establishing and achieving goals and maintaining a hospitable environment were also gratifying.

A strength of the work environment was related to being 'left alone' to do the job assigned with adequate resources plus immediate help if, say, the software system went down, which reflects a responsive environment. When personnel were united and took the risk of pushing for a more updated version of their product they were valued and the organisation was responsive, though not the larger parent institution.

The respondent felt productivity at a personal level was contingent upon being able to see the big picture and then moving to the small details of execution. With this view, as an example, the respondent saw the need for 'seamless' customer service across departments and was particularly frustrated at one department's five-year resistance to that value which impacts the respondent's job. The nimbleness and responsiveness of the department in which the respondent works makes work enjoyable.

The respondent identified quickly and with great emotion the greatest recent disempowering reality which centered around an organisation wide decision to buy a particular software system that had virtually none of the tools the respondent needed, a decision made by a few in the technology department. Advice from the respondent was not sought and was resisted when offered leaving the respondent with the feeling that the larger organisation had no idea of the respondent's world nor the level of the respondent's personal sense of loss. Within this topic it is the respondent's view that the larger organisation is consistent in its process of asking for input, ignoring the input and deciding unilaterally. The respondent cited one exception when the larger organisation adopted a new organisation wide strategy and the input of many was solicited and added. As to the local department in which the respondent has most relational contact it is considered a 'party hall,' relaxed, and community oriented. 'They trust me.'

In an empowering environment personnel will not constantly deal with roadblocks, while at the organisational level it benefits by becoming more productive.

The respondent noted that one leader had a more empowering impact than a successor but felt it was more a matter of the respondent being more responsive to one particular style. The empowering leadership traits are relational, feeling that input was

asked for and ‘heard,’ that the respondent’s reality was understood, and that the communication style was personal and intentional. A leader who makes their thinking visible is inviting others to join him or her and the respondent values this quality.

For a person to thrive in a given organisation the person must make a concerted effort to know the organisation which implies the organisation wants to be known, and then the person must care about a particular thing that the organisation cares about and finally, the respondent needs to understand how communication happens. For example, it may be better to enter a meeting with a proposal on paper than simply verbally communicate a great idea. Lastly, within the larger organisation are ‘little cultures’ which have a level of distinctiveness including particular values. To navigate successfully within the organisation often requires the ability to recognize these ‘little cultures’ and know what response will be productive.

5.3.4.4. Interview four, notable features

The respondent enjoys his or her job for four reasons, freedom to focus on something that he or she really loves, seeing the impact in others from those efforts, colleagues that are a joy and not spending time fighting invisible organisation ‘garbage.’ This is mostly due to the primary leader and his or her commitment to focusing on freeing employees to spend time on core competencies. This means that what administrative load must be shared among personnel is done so in an intentional way. As a result an unbalanced amount of important tasks do not inadvertently end up as the responsibility of one person.

The respondent could not easily think of a time of personal disempowerment eventually describing a well-intentioned effort by an organisation to find a position for the respondent that turned out to require tasks that did not correspond with his or her interests. This resulted in feelings of disinterest and loss of motivation.

Teams are viewed as the primary avenue of change. The respondent has no doubt about having necessary and adequate voice.

The leadership traits that make empowerment work include quick response to resource needs, paying attention to employee situations, being a good listener, and being an encourager. All these traits emphasize the awareness of the leader of the well-being and reality of the employee.

The respondent benefits from being empowered by feeling good about self, being more productive, and enjoying a freedom that results in intentional, useful pursuits. An empowering environment improves the reputation of the organisation and increases the quality of product by virtue of the personal growth of personnel.

Inherent in empowerment is the leadership's trust of employees rather than micromanaging or 'looking over the shoulder.' Financial pressure in the organisation is a disempowering reality that restricts opportunities resulting in low morale.

5.3.4.5 Interview five, notable features

Flexible hours, the 'opportunity to be real entrepreneurial,' good colleagues, creativity and the impact of seeing people transformed make this work setting appealing. The strengths of the workplace include a lack of micromanaging, lots of creativity, a

shared vision and mission, and adequate freedom and support to pursue things the employee values.

The respondent experienced significant disappointment over a research passion that was not shared by leadership. Anything that threatens the morale of the respondent's tier of employees is seen as inhibiting including being deprived of voice due to 'back-room' deals, one or two people overruling group decisions, and keeping the channels of feedback and communication invisible.

Without any reflection the respondent was able to quickly describe a disempowering event that occurred when a group decision perceived to be in the purview of the group was countermanded by one individual with more authority. To the respondent this type of action creates a sense of futility and results in people 'just going home' or disengaging. This is linked to a further comment on how decisions are just announced rather than creating ownership by inviting input.

The reason organisations have trouble sustaining empowerment is due to the misuse of power, which is magnified if the organisation does not regularly revisit the empowerment value to evaluate whether it is thriving. This suggests the need for continuous intentional.

In connection with present responsibilities, the respondent thrives when he or she is encouraged through personal contact. When the individual is empowered they benefit by less stress, more productivity in part through feeling safe, and the freedom of creativity. The respondent used the metaphor of a family to illustrate the benefit to the organisation.

What are the leadership traits in harmony with empowerment? A leader who is secure, not needing to protect ego, and thus communicating openly and surfacing assumptions can be an empowering leader. Unpredictability in a leader is inhibiting and making thinking visible is an asset. Conflict avoidance in a leader is also a trait not in harmony with an empowering environment. A leader should display the courage of personal awareness. It is the view of the respondent that empowerment leadership traits can be learned. In keeping with this, transparent systems fostering safety and clear channels of communication are essential systems traits. This communication is seen as part of a pattern where people know what others are doing which facilitates encouragement. In an empowering environment everyone ‘takes responsibility for the place.’

5.3.4.6 Interview six, notable features

The mix of relating to people through written mediums and face to face make this job likeable, as well as the opportunity to improve the situation of others and impact the growth in other people. This growth is seen as possible because of relational opportunities and adequate resources. The respondent also highlights the absence of micromanagement as significant while performing within the context of high standards. Gender issues play a role in inclusion, expectation, and opportunity.

The respondent thrives with honest communication related to strengths and weaknesses while strengths are affirmed and space is given to grow. Working around vision is energizing.

Developing voice is a present point of growth and the respondent feels the lack of voice when asking permission overshadows making decisions. Some of the struggle over voice is related to personal perceptions of position and insecurity. However the perception is that the institution wants an employee to function in freedom.

When asked about a disempowering event the respondent was quick to describe a three way conversation in which the topic drifted into an arena where the respondent had little expertise and one member of the conversation was overt in letting he or she know that the respondent's opinions in this arena did not carry validation. In an empowering conversation the respondent's ideas would be validated as appropriate to share.

There is a difference between managing an organisation and empowering people. Management has to do with systems that may necessarily be in conflict with empowerment, but the respondent believes that in an empowering environment, having defined the system, people can be invited to function outside of them. Often in systems experimentation is a way forward. In the present organisation empowerment is advanced as people spend time together, understand that there are tiers of authority, and see the implications of that understanding. A relational environment helps to draw the respondent out into a larger piece of the organisation and improves relational and social skills plus catching vision.

Empowering leadership is confident in self and ability, aware of their 'own darkness,' is the opposite of being negative, reactionary, not self-regulated and not clear thinking. The respondent wondered if how a leader presented himself or herself socially is connected to whether they are empowering or not. However, a primary role of the leader is to generate a climate where people feel safe to grow and have those

opportunities. When the leader is affirming, communicating clearly, and holding people accountable to a healthy standard, these are empowering. Developing empowerment might require deconstruction which may need to be facilitated by a mentor.

An empowering work environment is a benefit to individuals by giving leaders the freedom to lead and others the freedom to optimize personal giftedness and have positive impact on the people served. An empowering environment makes the organization more attractive.

5.3.4.7 Interview seven, notable features

The respondent appreciates being treated with respect, loves to help students and enjoys seeing a project done from beginning to end. A work place strength is collaboration though it takes longer. As well, believing the work place reflects a common set of values is important. The respondent feels adequate freedom to make choices within known boundaries and feels productive with good tools, visible and defined boundaries and being included in planning if responsible for execution. Experiencing overload reduces the sense of productivity. Freedom to express ideas and opinions is pervasive. Within this context the respondent does feel under utilized due to previous work experience. The previous experience related to a male dominated work place and the respondent succeeded by hard work and earning trust because ‘I wanted to be one of them.’ The respondent thrives around a forgiving, patient and caring leader.

When in a supervisory role the respondent was able to improve the productivity of employees because of a conviction that they could change if encouraged.

The organization would benefit from an empowered employee through improved customer service and thus bottom line improvement.

The primary reason organisations struggle in maintaining an empowering environment is because the leaders will not let go of control and trust people. They ‘go hand in hand.’ In the present setting there appears to be very little training. The lack of pertinent tools is disempowering. The perception is that because of his or her present job description potential personal contributions are ignored.

5.3.4.8 Interview eight, notable features

A setting where a person can learn fast, use social media, build things, and network are features that make the present setting appealing. The respondent appreciates and thrives in a setting where there is a ‘hands off’ approach by management that communicates respect. Therefore, the present setting is one that gives the respondent a very high sense of meaning and impact. There is no fear to articulate concerns in proper settings or with appropriate people.

The respondent was able to respond to the question about personal disempowerment citing a work place where correction and rebuke were done in public and were personally humiliating.

The respondent was emphatic that the supervisor has a perspective of trust towards the respondent and it allows the respondent to thrive.

Constantly changing direction which generates insecurity and a place where resources do not match expectations could cause an organisation to be unable to sustain

an empowering culture. Then the issue of not being trusted was added which includes not having voice or being heard.

In regard to systems, the realities of delineated authority are essential.

The respondent feels that employees benefit in empowering cultures by being able to grow usually through relational connections. The organisation experiences increased productivity and reputation.

Empowering leadership traits include not micromanaging but rather investing trust. The attitude of the leader, whether positive or negative, trickles down throughout the organisation, so if, during the economic recession the leader was fearful, such an attitude would be felt and acted on throughout the organisation.

5.3.4.9 Interview nine, notable features

The features that make this job attractive are co-workers or colleagues, that it is a safe place that has been a healing place in the respondent's personal life, that it is a place where the opinion of the respondent is sought, and a place where the respondent has the opportunity to encourage others. The respondent's sense of well-being comes from a awareness of contributing and helping the team.

Workplace strengths are first and foremost relationships and also include the appreciation of diversity, as well as a setting where people can be authentic. Within the immediate work place the respondent has voice but feels in the larger organisation his or her voice is often ignored and trust appears to be lacking. The respondent feels that the ability and willingness to have voice is required if a workplace is to have trust as a prominent feature. In fact, for this respondent, organisational leadership nearly forced

the respondent to express his or her views and opinions as part of the respondent's normal pattern of interaction.

Deadlines help the respondent be productive.

Leaders that are relators, communicators, are willing to share the big picture, trust the respondent, and genuinely care about the respondent as a person help the respondent thrive.

The respondent was able to quickly describe a disempowering setting where a co-worker was consistently abusive, yet due to a regular change of leadership, no one provided protection nor required of the co-worker a more respectful demeanor. The respondent felt at the mercy of this co-worker. The situation shifted when a new boss showed a commitment to the respondent, helping him or her gain confidence and explore greater opportunities. The breakthrough occurred when the new boss earned trust by being authentic about his own struggles. The supervisor believed that the respondent had aspirations that were worthy and worth a risk. The respondent gained trust in the new supervisor and by action and receiving increased responsibility the supervisor showed trust in the respondent.

Being brought into a discussion where the respondent's perspective is valued and the team functions with one another out of trust is a preferred experience of the respondent.

The personal benefits to being empowered include increased confidence which translates into a willingness to contribute and participate, feeling encouraged, and increased energy coming from knowing one is trusted. The organisation benefits from

increased contributions from personnel, increased productivity, better information flow, and a work force that knows they are part of something that matters.

The respondent cited a particular department in the larger organisation that uses rules that communicate distrust. This department is in disharmony with how other departments actually function as and it creates a disempowering system. As a result other departments must expend energy trying to go around this department and its rules in order to function effectively. It generates a planned and intentional effort at strategic subversion.

If the implementation of an empowering environment results in too many new initiatives the infrastructure may not be able to facilitate them all and it could hamper the ability of the organisation to sustain the effort. An indirect result could be that busyness can devalue and diminish needed relational dynamics. Ultimately the respondent sees empowerment not as a program but as a healthy way of interaction.

When given the opportunity to address any other topic the respondent explained a recent organisational decision related to decision-making systems that resulted in the feeling of exclusion and also confusion about who gets to make what decisions.

5.3.4.10. Interview ten, notable features

Other people and a sense of well-being that comes from being part of another person's discovery make this job enjoyable.

The thing that is most useful in being productive is having time. The strengths of the work environment include the civilizing impact of the immediate culture.

The respondent cited an increase in trust focused towards the respondent as a very meaningful shift which has resulted in less micromanaging and more relaxed and thoughtful decisions.

Two events were fresh to the respondent related to a setting or time of being disempowered. Both involved supervisors. In the first instance, after behaving in a particularly useful and helpful way towards the organisation, the supervisor betrayed the respondent, an action the respondent believes came from the low self-esteem and fragile ego of the leader. The second instance was again a supervisor who resented some success and popularity the respondent had achieved and tried to remove the forum that was creating that success.

Change happens in a collaborative way in this department. However, even with this approach ideology can still block what otherwise would appear to be a very common sense of obvious change.

The respondent thrives around a positive attitude, innovative ideas, and energy.

The individual benefits from an empowering environment by gaining an increased sense of well-being and the ability to serve the community well. The organisation benefits from improved reputation, mission fulfillment, and a well-served community.

Organisations have trouble sustaining empowering cultures because of bureaucratic tendencies which couple with 'small kingdoms' or turfs within the larger organisation. These small kingdoms propagate obstructionist viewpoints. Money can also obstruct the effort to create a sustaining empowerment through how it is allocated.

Leadership traits that are in harmony with empowerment are based on the proposition that what is good for the person is good for the organisation. Thus a

supportive culture, one where people feel cared for, is an essential leadership skill. This is described as holistic. Thus a person-centered and then mission-centered leadership paradigm is accurate. An increase in confidence has been a significant factor in the respondent's leadership development. Trust was the thing that contributed most to a feeling of confidence. Trust is built on a genuine concern for mission that is displayed consistently and authentically.

The respondent feels that for empowerment to flourish both the person and organisation must display mutual respect and investment in the other.

5.3.5 Focus group synopsis

Appreciation is a regular part of the culture for the production level personnel but less so at the support level. However, even there examples were given of ways appreciation had been shown. But all highlighted the joy of appreciation from the 'customers' of the institution. However, while most liked appreciation they did not think they did more or better because of it. They did express that if it was not there, it might have impact at the point of being more open to other job opportunities. It does make work and the workplace more pleasant. Yet while concurring that there is no cause and effect between appreciation and quality of work, they agreed that they use appreciation as a motivator of others, believing in others it does impact performance as well as satisfaction.

Of all the topics considered communication for competency or information people need to do a job well created the most passion and animation. The respondents were quickly able to identify numerous instances and individual departments in the larger

organisation that function in ways that hinder their own performance. Underlying this is the obvious reality that people want to do a good job. When asked why other systems or departments would so function, the reasons were control and fear. This discussion moved to the administrative use of power and it was concluded that it has the ability to diminish trust, status, and even a sense of worth. It was also concluded that the decisions about who can have information is often not system determined but individually determined which leaves the interpretation open to the charge of personal partisanship. As a counter discussion it was noted that information can be used to increase responsiveness and loyalty. This is compared with the employee feeling that others don't think he or she is capable when needed information is withheld. This also results in reactions that are deceptive and evasive to get around the offending system or department. It should be noted that the above discussion was around an entire system or department operating at a place of dysfunction and was not related to an individual.

Information that helps a person feel like they belong depends upon leaders who make their thinking visible and who allow others to see their struggles and fallibility. This invitation into the personal seemed to be significant. This was shared within an institution that has a significant participatory process for decision-making.

The fourth category of communication was having voice. Four of the five believed that if they said something and made sure someone knew it mattered to them they would have voice. The fifth believed that whether he or she had a voice depended on the alliance with the respondent's immediate supervisor. That respondent felt they had voice with their supervisor but not necessarily beyond that without validation from above. So there was voice at the immediate level and voice in the larger arena. One

respondent suggested that their lack of investment in voice was related to realities in the system instead of personal style.

Trusting a leader depended on whether the leader followed through, that their actions matched their words and that that was a consistent feature of their behaviour. This feature was magnified if they followed through even if some things changed and it was a sacrifice to do what they said they would do. The group also shared the description of a leader who tells the same story regardless of setting so their words are dependable rather than opportunistic. Another valued trait of a leader is that they listen and want to understand.

There was considerable discussion in regard to trusting a leader and about the leader's willingness to adhere to the same processes they or the institution expect of others. This is in contrast to unilateral decision-making that ignores processes that are clearly in place. Illustrating this, the focus group used a number of situations where they felt employees were treated with injustice or a sense of fairness was ignored. This impacts trust and is demoralizing. Leaders may need to respond to realities that the system cannot for the moment adequately address. Never the less this was a clear and present issue in the organisation.

How does an employee know they are trusted? They are not micromanaged. Evaluations are routine and orderly. There is freedom to do the job within boundaries and with accountability.

Confidence in a leader, which relates to competency, comes from wise decisions that have consistently productive outcomes. The leader listens, inviting in other realities, perspectives, and information. They work hard and give others time to process

information. All felt their immediate supervisors understood what they needed, that their supervisors knew them.

They observed one leader, coming out of one industry that had a tendency to one leadership style, change his leadership style to fit his new reality after watching how people in this new reality functioned.

The group felt the strength of their organisation was in the dialogue, the ‘thrashing it out,’ mindset of the participatory involvement.

5.3.6 CEO interview

In giving a history of the institution the leader drifted into describing what leadership looks like, showing how the CEO got the production workers what they wanted and got the larger institution what it wanted, both of which centered around three strategies intentionally executed and with the intended results. It is interesting that none of the production workers cited the element that the leader noted, although upon direct questioning the production workers would admit they wanted it.

A work environment that helps people thrive includes conducive space with adequate tools and technology, developing an institutional generosity towards employees, a support of the giftedness of each production person, and trust in the leader exhibited by personnel knowing the leader has their best interests at heart, wants to listen, will not betray them, and is open. As an example, the CEO highlighted a series of individual dinners in which he or she asked each employee to dream and make a wish list he or she could dialogue with them about and ‘see what could happen.’

People benefit by being in an empowering work place because they are free to create, they can expand personally, and in this environment where the employee is not subject to micromanaging there is trust. The leader spent considerable time showing how the strengths of individuals were recognized and opportunities developed for them.

Empowerment culture benefits the institution by improving quality.

Why do institutions have trouble sustaining an empowering culture? Because, there must be a healthy tension between innovation and institutionalisation. When innovation overwhelms infrastructure there are problems. Also, structures tend to calcify, become self-serving, and thus require too much energy to overcome. In an organisation where there is not undulation, a moving back and forth between these two qualities, empowerment suffers.

Leadership traits that enhance empowerment include first a keen awareness in the leader's personal faults and shortcomings. Second, a view that people have great potential and capacity that must be supported and praised. Third, a desire to show people that they are personally cared for and valued. Fourth, the leader understands that the leader creates the primary perspective or reality that the organization functions in.

Since different types of communication occur in different types of settings, this CEO spent considerable time explaining that to get at a new thing he created a new communication setting.

An employee trusts the leader when they see the leader do what he or she says they will do, when the leader listens and then acts, when the leader is accessible and when the leader shows respect and value to others. The leader trusts an employee when

he or she knows that the employee, in their activity, will respect boundaries and show support even when the leader is not present.

The CEO was emphatic about how a particular leader trusted him or her and it was displayed by how he was valued, encouraged, and confided in. All this rather than being 'large and in charge.'

When considering how a good leader changed something about himself or herself, the COE talked about one leader who had a negative perspective of another leader and simply decided to take a different attitude which was caught by others.

5.3.7 Case Two Synopsis

The uniqueness of this case rests in the exceedingly strong felt level of collegiality almost to a level that may feel inbred or enmeshed, yet this trait is juxtaposed with a high emphasis on freedom and personal development even noting that personal development and maturity creates greater freedom to declare boundaries. How these two traits actually rest together is intriguing.

In the responses and comments that were part of the second questionnaire conflict resolution was scored as a strong organisational skill as well as healthy group cohesion and communication. These three appear connected. The organisation has a low tolerance for unresolved conflict and it appears that personnel believe that efforts to resolve conflict will be supported by the organisation and that the organisation believes that most if not all personnel possess the skills needed to resolve conflict. There was robust group cohesion that revealed itself in the highly collegial decision-making processes. This may be in part because of the history of the institution and the type of industry the institution

is part of, but even with those assumptions the level of group awareness seems remarkable. The agreement of all three categories may suggest this self-perception is accurate.

Yet, within this very collegial atmosphere there is what appears to be another unique thing. In the answers and comments in the category of decision-making, of the eighteen comments twelve of them were on the theme of voice. Clearly it is the felt and declared expectation that having voice, being able to speak clearly and honestly about issues and being heard by those significant to self and the institution is remarkably pronounced. This again may be in part due to the type of industry and its professional nature. But this may not be the whole story.

Again, for purposes of comparison I will use the four research categories to guide this synopsis.

5.3.7.1 Pre-conditions

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the data is that in individual descriptions of what the respondents liked about their work place nine of ten highlighted some feature of the relational dynamics with others as a primary positive characteristic. This relational dynamic was either in regard to the significance of others to them or their impact on others. But either way, it showed a remarkable level of appreciation and value placed on people from the level of what others in the organisation felt about them, or what they felt about their colleagues, or what they felt about their customer base. This data was not just about what they felt but how they saw others, which was in a significantly positive light regarding personal growth, capacity and desire to improve and

contribute. In the interview with the CEO, when describing the history of the organization the CEO immediately drifted to the people and how they were valued and then gave a series of vignettes on how he or she and the organisation had spotted a person and nurtured their capacities and saw them grow and contribute and how the organisation tries to align itself with such a view of people that is positive, expectant, and investing.

The above would also suggest the authenticating element of the leader who, while living within the constraints of the bottom-line needs of the larger organisation, cannot help but view people in a particular way and act that way towards them.

But, as reflected in the previous section, this view of and investment in people happens within a framework of significant and expected freedom. Though a number of respondents talked about the necessity of structure and framework and its value in the immediate organisation, it was from the vantage point of maximizing the results of people who function with a high degree of freedom and institutional support of that freedom and the potentials that freedom can produce such as creative activity and personal growth. The resistance to micromanaging, even though the feature itself was absent, was great and was also a value of the CEO. Micromanaging was seen as a relational violation of trust. While not stated directly, it was indirectly implied that this flexibility of the organisation towards personnel was not always something the leaders experience within their own sphere due to answering to bottom line issues and the structure of the larger organisation. A production person would sometimes see the leader as unable to function as flexibly as they would like, while giving significant flexibility to those under them.

5.3.7.2 Traits and processes

Of the answers related to what causes or allows someone in the organisation to thrive, and what qualities seem necessary for that person to feel and function in an empowered way, in this case over forty-five percent were related to the dynamic of relationship and team. The perceived power of collegiality, collaboration, openness and transparency to one another, and shared vision and values seems nearly overwhelming in its impact on the organisational culture. It may well be true that with a culture this steeped in relational dynamics people may not be hired without it.

These relational constructs include issues around communication, authenticity, support, safety, and voice. On the surface these traits may seem to be contradictory. The second largest grouping of responses was related to issues of freedom, creativity, the necessary absence of micromanaging and its immediate impact on trust. How can a social culture seem so collaborative, and yet possess great freedom? It would appear that the missing link is control. As noted about twelve of eighteen comments on decision-making had to do with voice, showing how significant it is in this culture, yet it somehow does not violate community and collaboration. The CEO described how he felt new levels of communication require new forms, so he created a new grouping of people to get at a different set of information.

So the highest feature within traits and processes is this relational dynamic but is followed closely with issues of freedom and trust that are considered connected. It would appear that this freedom rests not only on a particular view of people and relational trust, but on the high level of competence, responsibility, and self-regulation exhibited among the members of the culture.

Remarkably, with the huge emphasis on relationship and freedom, a repeated topic was the value of structure. Structure is seen as a mediator and enabler of creativity and freedom and relationality. In contrast with the immediate features of the structure, since human and thus flawed, many spoke of the features of the larger organisation giving an almost endless description of the departments and policies that are inhibitors of effective work, relational trust, and customer service. In fact, the most sharply worded discussion and the most animated was on the issue of communication for competence and how the larger organization was so debilitating because of its arbitrary and partisan decisions related to information in contravention to how departments actually work.

5.3.7.3 Leadership traits

Not surprisingly, one of the most expected qualities of leadership, given the emphasis previously noted on voice, collaboration, and freedom, is listening. In fact, as one would expect, given the preceding section the major part of the leadership traits seen as empowering are relational traits of listening, supportive, respect, encouraging, caring for people, inviting input, awareness of others, and expressing appreciation. With it comes an emphasis on trust. The CEO strongly emphasized the impact of trust in his personal development as did one of the respondents that was directly impacted by the CEO 'investing trust,' in him or her. A corollary of trust is the willingness to let go and not micromanage.

The CEO, the focus group, and other respondents clarified that a leader doing what he or she said, or matching rhetoric to action was essential to credibility. This

behaviour and the predictability it generates lays the foundation for the action and even risk that empowering behaviour requires.

While in some data from another source evidence of trust was linked to being given responsibility, here trust was connected to listening. So, 'if he or she hears me,' then I will trust them.

5.3.7.4 Benefits, personal and organisational

Perceived benefits to the individual who is treated in an empowering way include a series of things that will be absent or reduced, such as fear, stress, and roadblocks. Empowering others makes possible increased exercise of imagination, confidence, and personal giftedness. These personal features are suggested to reflect a healthy sense of well-being. Freedom and productivity are by-products of these traits.

The organization is benefited primarily through increased productivity and creativity. Reputation was mentioned repeatedly.

5.3.7.5 Disempowerment

Of the ten respondents who said they had experienced a disempowering incident or situation five reflected systemic problems and five reflected personal problems. A personal disempowerment might be being 'blindsided' by a co-worker repeatedly and without recourse. A systemic problem might be a leadership decision to withhold key information related to a major organisational realignment from a person that would have to implement a significant part of that organisational policy.

In every case, the primary response was disengagement, either from the organisation, or passive disengagement as in discontinuing giving voice, or firing initiated by the organisation.

While the degree of disempowerment may differ the data does suggest that there is something in the human make-up that makes it extremely difficult to be continually present physically or emotionally in a situation where the person feels they have been disempowered and deprived voice. The sense of being violated also appears to have lingering and powerful residual impact. It is noted how quickly and often emotionally nearly all respondents could recite with considerable accuracy, as they recall it, such events.

5.3.7.6 A Theory of empowerment

The theory of empowerment rising out of the first case focused on two fresh levels of thinking in regard to empowerment theory. The first was the possibility of pre-conditions necessary prior to an empowerment strategy being implemented. I suggested three possible pre-conditions, namely, a particular view of people, top leadership buy in, and organisational flexibility.

The second case reflects data that gives cause to suggest that these three qualities are again present in much the same dimension and ways. Yet there are subtle dimensions that are present in this second case. Along with a view of people that includes the quality of aspiration, capacity for improvement, and a desire for place or visibility, this case highlighted an urge to contribute, nearly at an altruistic level.

The place of leadership in the enterprise of empowerment was unabated.

Flexibility was also featured, but an additional term was used repeatedly that did not show up in the first case. It was the term ‘freedom.’ The implications, when taken in context, would suggest a workplace with a heightened emphasis on creativity and competency.

A second level of thinking regarding empowerment is the ‘fertile soil’ level that emerged with four qualities from case one: trust, voice, connectivity, and authenticity. These four traits were everywhere obvious in the second case but with added and sometimes subtly augmented meanings. Connectivity had the qualities of appreciation, support, and accessibility but the meanings of these three may be slightly altered. Appreciation not only carried the meaning from case one of valuing the relationship but was connected to capacity and performance and was seen by those using appreciation as a motivating factor in performance. Being supportive, was not only about knowing that my enterprise is linked with others but is an affirmation of the other’s true identity. Accessibility in this case is more about mutuality. One of the features of accessibility that surfaced in this case was the leader making his or her thinking visible.

In the first case, voice was connected to being present in and to the organization and this perspective was reaffirmed in this second case. It had the additional meaning of signifying authentic collaboration.

Trust was again a constantly recurring theme. However in the first case an employee knew they were trusted if they were given responsibility or more responsibility. In the second case it appears that personnel felt they were trusted if others, particularly leaders, listened to them. This is strongly in line with how often voice came up in the second case. While in the first case trusting a leader depended in part on a leader being

secure, without a fragile ego, this was extended in case two. A leader's ability to see themselves clearly, including their 'dark side,' was a strong focus and a primary focus by the CEO.

Authentication in case one was very much about a leader following through on what he or she said. In case two this was not contradicted but was extended to include the ability to let go of control. Also, the emphasis in case two on the capacity to grow and contribute was magnified with the CEO making multiple references and giving multiple examples of how he or she had personally worked with people seeing their potential and giving them opportunity.

Unexpectedly to me, the personal benefit termed 'happy,' or 'confident,' or increased 'self-worth' showed up as a sense of personal well-being. There was an additional emphasis in case two. This was a repeated mention of qualities that were absent if empowerment was present and they were the absence or reduction of stress, fear, and roadblocks. Increased freedom of imagination or creativity showed up as a benefit personally whereas it was seen as an organisational benefit in case one. As with the first case productivity was an organisational benefit. In case two, reputation was cited as a benefit. In regard to personal benefit, noticeably absent from case two, a non-profit, but present in case one, a for-profit, were promotion and financial reward.

While strong emotion continued to be expressed in the second case, as people related instances of disempowerment, a pattern emerged more clearly. All ten respondents could recall a time when they had been disempowered and nine of ten did so rapidly and most with emotion. The ten incidents fell into two categories. Five cited a disempowering experience rising from personal conflict and five experienced

disempowerment from a structural or systemic cause. Most notable, in all ten cases the ultimate result coming either from the organisation in one case and in the other nine from the individual was detachment. The detachment could be physical or emotional and relational, or something like holding skills or thinking in reserve. But in every case it was clear that there was something so toxic about disempowerment to the human make up that if it occurs in any meaningful way and for any significant time, some type of detachment appears almost inevitable. Again this may well impact performance, opportunity, and retention.

A final feature of case two that was, at least in bulk, not present in case one, was a recurring mention of the use of structure. In case one, since there was less emphasis on ‘freedom’ than in case two there may have been less reason to consider structure. But in case two where the culture was heavily weighted to freedom, creativity, imagination, and collaboration or working in close proximity, it may be that structure was seen as a more protective and mediating influence. I will revisit this as I analyze data from case three.

5.4 Case three, a church

5.4.1 Case description

This case is a local church. It is located in a large metro area west of the Mississippi River. It is connected to a large and old protestant denomination in the United States that would be considered part of the main stream of church culture. The congregation is approximately 2500 members with a staff of just over twenty full and part-time. It is approximately thirty years old with stable patterns of growth and internal

dynamics such as financial stability. The church would be considered theologically conservative. It has two unique features. It has invested in church planting both in personnel and finances. Secondly, the senior pastor has a long tenure at this local church with accompanying security as part of the denominational structure. Of the twenty-one employees, ten participated in various aspects of the questionnaires, interviews and the focus group plus the senior pastor.

5.4.2 Confirmation questionnaire

The questionnaire of thirteen questions was administered to eleven employees focusing on the basic traits of empowerment. The average score based on a five point Likert scale for each of the questions in six categories was 4.10 or within the range of an organisation that aspires to being an empowering workplace with some features evident. The respondent average for the ten responses ranged from 4.92 to 3.07. The particularly low score reflected a single employee who left just after answering the second questionnaire. The lowest is the average to responses to the question concerning clarity of lines of authority yet six responded usually or always and three occasionally with two answering seldom. Otherwise the range of averages is very similar. The scores are close to those of the other two cases in range.

5.4.3 Organisational dynamics questionnaire

5.4.3.1 Leadership

The overall scores suggest a very high confidence in leadership, This may in part be due to the longevity and high credibility of the senior pastor and as well as a particular culture in that region to show deference to religious leaders. There is a high level of respect and appreciation for position. There appears to be an inclination to ‘forgive’ leadership for missteps because of typical competency and good intentions. Out of a total question response of fifty only four answers were occasionally and none at seldom or never.

5.4.3.2 Motivation, performance, and reward

There was a shortage of tangible signs of appreciation and training opportunities scored low enough to show some discontent in those areas. Of the eight respondents who chose to comment on questions, seven of them commented on training and six of seven were negative. It would appear on-the-job training is the preferred model but obviously not a view employees share.

5.4.3.3 Communication

Communication answers seemed adequate. The most negative related to communication about change that affects a person where four of ten said this was occasionally done well. Five of eight commented on this statement noting that planning is sometimes done without the appropriate people present, change occurs and then is

communicated. It is noted that some think the misstep in communication is when change communication needs to pass between departments.

5.4.3.4 Decision-making

The decisions made are most often seen as in accord with the values of the organisation and they are implemented in an organised way. But decisions are often made without involving people who are affected by the decision and often without regard to the formal structure. Thus decision-making can be unilateral. There appears to be freedom in the execution of decisions but collaboration around decision-making is weaker.

5.4.3.5 Conflict

The scoring in this area shows a reasonable amount of care over undue conflict and the willingness to resolve it. In accordance with the previous area of decision-making there is some fear related to decision-making and authority which may reflect the unilateral way certain decisions are made.

5.4.3.6 Group cohesion

The organisation showed very healthy scores in this area. Being a trusted member, solving problems together and feeling valued are strong traits. Five of the seven respondents who made comments used the phrase 'love my work,' to describe how they feel about their job. There is a significant level of personal meaning in what many of the respondents do in their roles at the church.

5.4.4 Individual interviews

5.4.4.1 Interview one, notable features

The collaborative nature of the work environment, the variety of activities, and the people one has the opportunity to work with, all make the job enjoyable. The sense of having positive impact on other people makes the job fulfilling.

The organisation is leadership driven which increases the speed of decision-making. This is perceived as a work-place strength.

Along with the decisive nature of leadership, leaders that are compassionate, supportive, have a deep personal commitment to empowering others, and work constructively with the failures of others make the workplace empowering.

Personal productivity was increased when an administrative assistant was assigned to him or her. Productivity is negatively impacted by regular distractions in the workplace. Relational accountability helped the respondent to thrive.

There was no hesitancy to go to someone appropriate within the organization if the respondent saw a persistent bottleneck of some sort. However at a personal level, the respondent doesn't like confrontation so for that reason would not be eager to seek out someone if solving a bottleneck carried with it the potential for relational conflict. The respondent was healthily aware of her or his boundaries and within them felt free to make decisions without consultation.

Training is not considered a part of the culture and a reason given is the absence of real leader visibility and support for this behaviour.

In an empowering environment there is a liberty to try new things with the knowledge that if the primary leader disagrees with your decision he or she will tell you. This is a personal benefit. The organisation benefits through increased creativity.

The respondent was able to quickly describe a disempowering event which happen twenty-five years earlier and was related to receiving a negative performance appraisal. The verbal and not written reason given was that the respondent did not participate in the social side of company trips which included some morally questionable activities. This left the respondent confused about what was being expected and led to personally hurtful decisions under such corporate pressure. This was communicated in an emotional way with an awareness of a personal violation.

Why do organisations struggle to maintain empowering environment? Because they want change instantly. The respondent noted that such a culture also requires total support of the top leaders and that such leaders need to display the relational skill of being able to encourage and identify with the employees.

The respondent felt that such an environment carries excitement generated by collaborative effort that really has impact displayed by vision, passion, and compassion.

5.4.4.2 Interview two, notable features

The respondent loves the job that fits her or his skills perfectly. The highly relational nature of the job, the flexibility of the schedule, and the humane environment were seen as those things that gave the respondent a sense of well-being. The strengths of the workplace include the spiritual dimension of doing work perceived to be the work of God, the relational intentionality, and a sense of purpose and meaning. The respondent

continually compared her or his present work environment with the work environment of her or his previous job and the lack of humane structure to it. As an example of a lack of humane structures employees were not able to go to the bathroom for hours due to four hour work blocks.

An environment where one could thrive included intelligence, hard work, and interesting things.

Empowering leaders need to be able to laugh at themselves, work hard, show competence, have clear goals, display an ability to communicate, and have enthusiasm. In the present setting these traits are evident, though it is noted that changes happens from the top down.

In the immediate work place there would be no fear pointing out a bottleneck but the respondent is aware that this would not be everyone's view.

Self-satisfaction, self-worth, increased confidence, being appreciated, and knowing you had an opportunity to have an impact are personal benefits of being empowered. The organisation benefits because it gets a better employee that is willing to take initiative and even risk.

Barriers to sustaining empowerment include the need for employees to 'grow up,' as well a lack of internal support.

This respondent could easily cite a disempowering experience, noting in her or his previous employment, after years of experience, she or he explained to a supervisor how a new employee in the probationary period was functioning very poorly and unprofessionally only to be discredited, de-valued, and treated dismissively. It was then she or he decided to plan for retirement.

5.4.4.3 Interview three, notable features

Helping people and being able to check things off the to do list make the job enjoyable. Work place strengths include the Christian perspective and setting and the love that staff have for one another. The stress level is significantly less in this setting compared to the corporate world and training is a personal joy.

The respondent thrives in a setting where there is trust, opinions are respected and where someone invests in the respondent. Boundaries are clear in his or her present setting and there is a freedom to make decisions within those boundaries. To be productive it is important to have good communication, which is a theme the respondent mentions repeatedly, noting that that area could be improved in this setting. There is nothing worse than feeling stupid and it happens from not receiving adequate communication.

The response to the question of describing a disempowering moment was very rapid. The respondent described a time in the corporate world when the company in which the respondent worked was taken over and the respondent had no power in that process. The respondent eventually left and contrasts that with his or her present employment setting.

In this setting the respondent would have no difficulty in speaking to someone about a bottleneck of some kind

Leadership should possess good communication skills to be empowering and the willingness to build good relationship and develop mutual support.

The individual who is empowered experiences less stress and it also lessens the responsibility of the supervisor. In an empowering organisation that trusts employees the responsibilities of the employee can be increased and supervisors can focus on other important matters.

Many leaders are 'control freaks,' and that gets in the way of maintaining an empowering environment. Leaders who won't let go, or walk the talk also hamper an empowering environment. These features result in not trusting people.

Training is seen by this respondent as very important and while it is improving in this setting it is still a 'hit and miss effort.'

Reflecting on other topics connected to empowerment the respondent suggested that increased empowerment can increase stress, accountability, and responsibility. Therefore, people should not be too eager to embrace it without realising what it means. Staff should understand expectations in an empowering environment.

5.4.4.4 Interview four, notable features

The respondent loves the job because of a love for the people the respondent gets to work with and the belief that he or she is making a difference, an eternal difference that has intrinsic value to him or her.

Freedom, a 'lot of freedom' to do the job, take risks, try new things are strengths of the workplace.

To thrive the respondent needs people who can be a sounding board, someone to share accountability and someone who is supportive. Compared with that, the respondent was able to describe quickly a previous setting in which she or he felt very disempowered. It was in another employment setting where there was very little change, the structure stifled, and a person was constantly struggling against it.

Conversely, this person feels most productive in an atmosphere of freedom where she or he is free to go 'at it her or his way.'

To maintain an empowering environment leadership must relinquish control, seek feedback, collaborate, have egos that will allow other people's ideas to win, and value the process as much as the goal.

People benefit by having the opportunity for personal growth, having a sense of worth and feeling that they have impact. The organisation benefits by having more assertive and engaged employees who can broaden the impact of the organisation.

If there is a bottleneck, in order to honor people, he or she and others often just find an alternate route.

Empowered people can be more difficult to manage and supervise, so they must be equipped and quality control must be reviewed and maintained. Most training is on the job that the respondent admits fits a certain type of personality and not everyone.

5.4.4.5 Interview five, notable features

The respondent goes home with a sense of well-being when he or she knows that there has been positive movement in the organisation and that efforts have made an impact in people's lives. The work environment strengths include stability, visible rules,

and within those rules considerable liberty. There is an unusually low level of conflict in the organisation.

The most productive work environment for the respondent begins with trust and then freedom to discuss ideas and concepts, where creativity is valued and there is a willingness to take risks.

In a disempowering incident, a CEO displayed a lack of trust by promising a particular direction then taking a different direction without telling the respondent, in effect hiding it. Another disempowering event occurred when a direction was set, the respondent did considerable work towards that goal, only to have a decision made to change direction and 'pull the plug' on the project.

Change occurs either directionally by upper leadership or by a ground swell of grass roots preferences that reach top leadership.

To thrive the respondent needs a culture that is diverse, smart, curious, not afraid of conflict with skill to resolve it, passionate, that have people with a sense of mission, and competent.

People benefit by being empowered because it meets a basic human need and the respondent who is in leadership sees one of the goals of leadership is to make it easy for people to serve and increase capacity. This matches basic human need. This is a primary benefit to people who are empowered. The organisation benefits through increased creativity which brings life to the organisation.

For top level leadership to be empowering they need to trust, be willing to take risks, and be okay with the mess of people getting involved. Trust means not only trustworthy, but predictability, or, 'I trust him to be him.'

The reason organisations can't sustain empowering environment is because they get caught up with maintaining what has worked in the past, they get afraid, and so become too controlling and afraid to trust.

Training has a low priority in part because the primary leader believes leaders are born not made.

The fear of failure and of getting it wrong gets in the road of empowerment and organisationally the tendency to emphasize maximizing versus creating is also inhibiting. Maximizing is to work with what is already present and improve it while creating has a greater emphasis of bringing something new into the organisation. Some leaders feel useless if they give away ministry, activity or responsibility.

5.4.4.6 Interview six, notable features

The respondent loves her or his job because it is collaborative and with people the respondent just 'totally enjoys working with'. The feeling of well-being comes from doing a good job, making people happy and getting good feedback. The strengths of the workplace are mutual respect, the consistent values of family and God, and the human scale of how the culture works. The respondent thrives around humor and a positive attitude.

The workplace provides a pretty free area to make decisions within boundaries and the primary inhibiting feature is not getting information from others that she or he needs to perform well.

A disempowering experience involved working in a company where the respondent was not treated as an equal, not invited to certain things because of gender.

He or she responded by wanting nothing to do with them and could not continue to work there.

The respondent likes change and perceives it happens regularly in the workplace. There is also the freedom to talk and give suggestions.

When people are empowered they are more productive and ‘can get things done.’ The organization benefits by getting better results.

For leadership to support an empowering environment they need to trust people and have the wisdom to discern who is qualified and gifted for particular tasks and responsibilities. The ‘opposite of micromanagement’ is an essential feature along with the adequate tools and respect. Visionary leaders are born not trained. Leaders must let go and build relationships and build people up. Leaders need people skills because people work harder for people they like and know care about them.

The organisation has a low priority on training.

The reason some organisations can’t sustain empowerment is because the leaders did not fully buy in in the first place. Trust or control issues or hiring the wrong people were also factors. Leaders must know their people.

5.4.4.7 Interview seven, notable features

If at the end of a day the respondent went home with a sense of well-being it would be because there was healthy communication at work, pride in the quality of work done and the amount of work accomplished. The strength of the work environment is the staff relationships that make it feel ‘like family.’ The respondent feels complete freedom to point out places where the organisation could improve. However, the way of going

about it would depend on the person impacted. A church is in some nearly indefinable way different from typical workplaces outside of the church world, a family but even more than that.

To be productive, this respondent needs good communication of data and freedom to make decisions within boundaries. Change comes from the top and then details are worked out at lower levels which usually works fine.

To thrive the respondent needs a quality family life, to complete tasks well and to have fun. Decision-makers are preferred organisational partners.

While not able to describe a time when the respondent experienced disempowerment, the respondent then went on to describe his or her frustration when people are not treated equal or fair and rules aren't followed, namely avoiding class warfare.

Leaders need to lead by example, in the trenches, supportive and understanding.

The organisation is committed to training. This response comes from a person, who because of the technical nature of the respondent's work is allowed to keep up on the latest changes in the respondent's field of responsibility.

An empowered person stays current, relevant, and has opportunity for growth and freedom. The organization also stays current and enjoys greater productivity because people are happier,

Empowerment efforts fail in organisations because leaders don't take the time to build relationships with their people, get feedback, and spend the time that it takes.

5.4.4.8 Interview eight, notable features

A sense of well-being comes with completing projects and the respondent feels strengths of the workplace include the camaraderie that exists, a supportive atmosphere, and the quality and character of top leadership that is honest and wise.

The respondent receives adequate appreciation and is free to make decisions within boundaries. In order to be productive the respondent needs adequate communication.

The respondent feels disempowered when big picture people make decisions without consulting the task oriented people and the task-oriented people have to figure it out after the fact making it more difficult and creating more work.

Top leadership let people do their jobs without much interference and leadership shows enthusiasm.

The respondent compares the corporate model with the human scale and flexibility of this setting and finds in favor of this setting.

Training is just okay and it is primarily on the job in nature.

5.4.5 Focus group synopsis

All those participating felt they received adequate appreciation. The group talked about how respect for the process was a form of appreciation. People agreed that the primary leader was good at expressing appreciation and that some expressions of appreciation from a number of the staff were very creative. While people liked appreciation none of them felt it resulted in increased or better performance and they were not motivated by it. They also agreed that they used it to motivate others and

believed it had that capacity, though they did not need it to stay motivated. If it were absent and other things were not good as well, then the absence of appreciation may have a negative effect. They agreed that different people respond in different ways.

Information for competency was important and frustrating when not received. They talked at some length about this with some animation. If a person does not receive the information they need for competency it is considered a sign of disrespect.

Information for belonging was important. Not everyone needs to know or can know everything, but no one wanted to be left out in a way that makes them look stupid. They spoke at some length about how all of them had been left out of the communication loop at some point and all of the participants agreed that to maintain the right attitude they had to do some 'internal' or personal transactions. Communication creates community.

All felt they had voice with the appropriate person or persons.

Trust in a leader depends on confidentiality that creates a sense of safety and appreciation for what is appropriate, that people will not just be used. There is an expectation of consistency.

People and leaders gain trust through how they treat others as people watch and how they treat the person watching. Competency and being a good listener matters and a leader that keeps their word and 'walks the talk,' and is transparent gains trust.

Those in the group would consider themselves trustworthy if they were empathetic, open, followed through on commitments, were honest, and protected others and those not present. Being non-judgmental was considered a sign of trustworthiness.

Confidence in a leader comes through observed competency. A leader's passion and enthusiasm has an impact on those following.

Behaviours that show a leader changing positively include learning from mistakes which increases trust and appreciation for the leader and observing a leader change styles for a new time or season or goal in the organisation.

5.4.6 CEO interview

People are most productive in an environment of encouragement. The organisation has to have the right people. The right people want to please others, in the best sense of the word. A staff is like a sports team. Using that metaphor, everyone has to succeed to reach the goal, everyone has to hustle without external motivation, to love what they do, to enjoy the synchronized effort of a team, to value the process. Again, with this metaphor, optimum performance happens in a relaxed yet intense atmosphere or 'relaxed intensity.'

Leaders have to be authentic, and participatory. They cannot use delegation to abandon their people. They must use accountability as a team activity not something negative and display humility, not take self too seriously.

A staff that is empowering is authenticating what they are doing. Bringing satisfaction, pleasure in their job, fulfilling the mission of Christ and producing confidence are benefits to individuals who experience empowerment. The organisation benefits because it reduces conflict and generates a supportive environment of happy people who are more productive.

Organisations have trouble sustaining empowerment because leaders are insecure people who try to control out of lack of trust. The leader must have the right people but if that is happening then there should not be a reason for a lack of trust or unreasonable control that is out of balance with healthy empowerment.

The CEO feels people on his or her staff have voice in the right context, as compared to just whining. There needs to be reasonable expectations, however, for in any human system there will be things that cannot be fixed and are not worth the energy to fix, so effectiveness is more important than efficiency.

Right decisions carried out responsibly and relationally generate trust in a leader. Trust is built when the process is trustworthy and the goals and primary activities are in harmony with the mission of the Kingdom of God.

The CEO would trust the employee if they do what they are supposed to do, show consistency, give their best effort in moral and ethical ways, display a Kingdom interest, and purpose not to undermine the efforts of the larger organisation or other people.

This leader feels he or she has moved and been seen to move from being a 'control freak' to someone not so controlling, letting people do things in ways that are effective for them. He or she has also moved from a seeker to missional leader. His or her children, staff, and books have helped him or her change and improve. The leader must lead by example.

He or she has fundamentally altered his or her leadership style to have less control over people. There are no job descriptions. The leader is after action with the right attitude.

5.4.7 Case three synopsis

The respondents in this case strongly love their jobs and they expressed how much they enjoy working with those around them. There was a repeated emphasis on the human scale of the environment, and the personal ‘meaning’ that exists in the mission of the organisation, a number noting the spiritual nature of the enterprise. This was referred to often enough to highlight that many in the work force see this enterprise as ‘other than’ other organisations. Human scale means treating people not as objects or compartmentalizing, but knowing people have lives, families, concerns, and broader dimensions and, while not allowing these to rule the organization, decisions about people are made with these realities in view and respected.

5.4.7.1 Pre-conditions

A constantly repeated answer in response to questions about the quality of the workplace was that people loved their jobs because they loved the people they work with. This was the beginning of a perspective that seems to run throughout the organisation. While people are expected to get their work done, and most major decisions come from the top, there is a felt reality that people matter, that the design of the workplace essentially must take into account people and their needs, and that the human scale of the enterprise communicates how the organisation and leader values people in an organisation that sees it’s primary role as serving and helping people, or being in the people business.

The CEO highlights as the first responsibility of a leader to be an encourager, and it is further noted that one of the primary features of this social system is training which is an on-the-job model. It is agreed that this fits a certain type of person but it also

suggests a view of people that sees them as able to generate internal motivation, take responsibility for their own training, and maintain high quality. Within this framework the CEO does not have any job descriptions. He or she will simply hire someone and tell them to take care of a particular arena of responsibility. He or she trusts them to work out the relational, task, and other rubrics of the job.

This last comment feeds into reflections on flexibility where individuals are entrusted with the responsibility to fashion their job and make it work in a collaborative way.

A leader who does not give job descriptions is functioning in a way that can be very abusive to the workforce, because it also places few boundaries on him or her in regard to how they can check, rebuke, or otherwise put into disfavour a given employee. However, in the hands of a trusted leader, such flexibility and trust communicates a high degree of respect and healthy expectation regarding the capacity of the person. A leader in this organisation is expected to have good relational skills, know their people, and generate a work environment where there is mutual support.

This case may reflect that leadership can be somewhat unilateral at one level of the decision making process, if inclusionary further down in the process, and with a high degree of relational ‘chips,’ using a poker metaphor, can create a very empowering environment. So decisiveness need not mean exclusion.

5.4.7.2 Traits and processes

Respecting the process was one feature of showing appreciation. The processes related to training, communication, and decision-making with clear boundaries were

mostly understood by all. And within these fairly well understood processes that functioned effectively, if not perfectly, it allowed personnel to know in what contexts and boundaries they could operate with considerable freedom. The fact that the organization shows relatively little conflict could suggest that everything goes underground.

However, the data here more likely points to a relational setting with considerable clarity, in part due to the longevity and thus predictability of the leader and the leader's systems or ways, in which people have a considerable level of permission.

Nearly everyone, while knowing there were some areas to be careful with, felt they had considerable freedom to act, to point out things not working well, and do so with a clear perception of who to go to and how to go about it. It was even sanctioned that if a person was a bottleneck people could find a way to go around the bottleneck in order to achieve satisfactory results. Thus voice was seen as usually present. There was what appears to be a healthy balance between the task and the relational within which the task is accomplished.

The work environment was seen as having a considerable level of vibrancy. For example, enthusiasm was repeatedly mentioned as a trait effective leaders need to have. The environment was seen as decisive, yet supportive, where one mistake did not 'sink your ship.' When there was poor communication, meaning was not added to it, but rather it was viewed as simply the natural failure of human systems that cannot be perfect.

The issue of responsibility, of understanding that empowerment requires people to 'grow up,' to accept responsibility and even some stress suggests an organisation with eyes wide open and where competency and responsibility are valued. Mutual support happens in the context of everyone working hard. A regular review of quality control is

seen as a price for empowerment. Risk taking and creativity are viewed as valuable. This is seen as a way to keep an organisation from just trying to maximize what it has done in the past.

Trust was a constant theme and juxtaposed against micromanaging and controlling structures. Trust allows for the free flow of ideas, building systems that work rather than protecting territory, taking risks and showing mutual support and respect.

5.4.7.3 Leadership traits

Decision-making on larger issues comes from the top in this organization, but interestingly, is not seen as particularly stifling or restricting. Much of the leader construct is relational, with required traits including compassionate, supportive, accepting the failures of others, and identifying with the employee. The leader must display a secure ego and be able to laugh at himself or herself. Enthusiasm was a repeatedly mentioned leadership trait as well as the ability to communicate. Since in this setting the top leader is also regularly a public speaker this expectation of communication skill may be understood in that context. People expect the leader to trust them if they have earned it. And it is essential that the leader 'walk the talk.' This particular leader speaks of his or her journey from being very controlling to letting people be to figure out the best way.

This organisation wants a leader who will respect the process, allow other people's ideas to win if they are the best, and be predictable. Trust requires a leader to be discerning in identifying the best people for the organisation and to know who can handle what level of responsibility. Confidentiality and a sense of safety are seen as important traits for the leader.

Helping the team to achieve is the primary construct responsibility of a leader. This is relational where everyone has a part to play and must play it to their best ability. The leader is a player coach, leading by example, ‘walking the talk.’

5.4.7.4 Benefits, personal and organisational

Personal benefits to being empowered include freedom to create one’s own systems, to be creative, to take risks, to be self-satisfied, to develop a sense of self-worth, to increase confidence, to know that one is appreciated, to have impact, to enjoy less stress, to enjoy the possibility of personal growth, to fulfill a basic human need to be more productive, to stay relevant, to have one’s efforts authenticated and to fulfill mission. Many of these features show that people want to grow, can increase capacity, and are able to navigate change in a healthy way. Thus, benefits are to the individual person and to increased fulfillment of mission. This view of mission may be unique to a church or non-profit setting.

The organisation benefits because an empowering environment frees leaders to focus on other important issues, produces increased creativity and employee initiative, allows the employee to carry more responsibility, develops more engaged employees that broaden the organisation’s impact, improves quality, produces happier employees achieving higher productivity, reduces conflict and generates a more supportive environment. This list naturally falls into the categories of productivity, quality of work, and better relational environment.

5.4.7.5 Disempowerment

As respondents shared times of disempowerment it was true that most could quickly and often emotionally come up with an illustration. Seven of eight respondents could give an example, six of them quickly, of when they felt disempowered. Of the seven, five withdrew from the organisation in which it happened. Four of the seven gave examples connected to voice. Two were related to relational exclusion. On two occasions the employee is still with the organisation.

5.4.7.6 A theory of empowerment

The three features that were identified as pre-conditions continue with clarity through all three cases. A view of people that is expansive and optimistic shows up again significantly in case three, a church. If anything the value of people is intensified. The product, 'we are in the people business,' may be a reason this focus is intensified, but it is obviously there. In this third case, the practical results of this view are that the CEO does not have job descriptions and most training is on-the-job. Respondents in this case emphasized that an empowering environment requires mature people, who could handle stress, responsibility, were in effect 'grown up.' This focus had a consequence that leadership had to be discerning about who they hired.

Flexibility continues to be paramount. In all three cases there is a strong top down decision-making process that is perceived by the work force yet that feature does not, in itself, seem to preclude a significant level of perceived freedom in choices, voice, options, and creativity. If anything it may increase the sense of security in using the freedom that is given.

The buy in of top leaders and their authenticating behaviour is evident in the answers and focus group discussion and is a view shared by the primary leader. There was an increased emphasis on enthusiasm provided by the leader and the view that the leader should be 'in the trenches' with employees, leading by example, authenticating what was being done. Nearly all of the features of a quality leader in this last case had a strong relational construct to them. This relational IQ, or acute awareness of both the surface and invisible features of relational health, runs throughout the expectations of all three cases. Even in the for-profit case, the expectation that the CEO 'will not hurt me,' was startling in its sense of caring and awareness. An interesting feature that surfaced in this case was that one of the features that made a leader trustworthy was predictability, so that people could expect, in given situations, the leader would almost always function in a particular way, consistent with that leader. This allowed others to adapt in healthy and safe ways.

The four 'fertile soil' features continued without any additional traits added, but nuances to the four were evident. The features of supportiveness, appreciation, and accessibility were all present to the level of being essential but the emphasis in the last case was strongly focused on mutual supportiveness and appreciation. Accessibility was given less emphasis. Never the less, over all the relational aspects of the church affirmed the strong connection between the relational and an empowering environment. For example, communication was a regular emphasis in the responses of the third case. And a feature of being supportive was enthusiasm.

Trust had the same construct through out the three cases with the additional insight in case three, that one of the ways people learned whether they could trust the leader was by watching how the leader treated others.

Voice had no new features coming from the third case but only affirmed the previous two cases in its importance and it is clear that in empowering environments the expectation of voice is a paramount expectation.

In regard to people describing a time or incident in which they had been disempowered a common feature was the predictable result of detachment in the face of disempowerment. This was matched by the most common felt experience of being denied voice.

Authentication, or knowing the organisation is convinced of a given reality because of the behaviour of people of influence and position behaving in ways consistent with that reality, was again strongly featured in case three. The leader felt that an empowering environment also authenticated the individual and the work of the individual. One of the ways authentication was determined was by watching how the leader treated others. So this authentication feature has as its primary quality incarnational reality. In other words, rhetoric takes on material form and can be observed by others.

The perceived benefits stay stable, as well, through the three cases with one exception. It is noted that twice in case three a benefit of empowerment is seen as reducing conflict. A review of the previous cases again suggests that that may well be the accurate conclusion, for in all the cases, while conflict can be described and is noticed, it never reaches proportions that are disruptive relationally or organisationally.

It is again noticed in case three that empowerment is seen as something in harmony with how people are made, something connected to basic human need.

Three conclusions rise from this assessment. The three cases, while similar in size, were very different in goals and internal dynamics yet they heavily relied on the same kind of terminology to describe their lived experience. Second, within an empowering environment is an assumption of what leadership and the organisation are trying to do which is seen as affirming people and their identity. Because of this affirming effort personnel are forgiving when aspects of the organisation do not measure up to that goal. Third, in none of the cases was structure given much emphasis. Only in the non-profit, among highly educated and extremely empowered people, was structure seen as particularly important, and then as a safe guard, but even there it was seen as a peripheral dimension. This may have a number of meanings but one may be that if often or usually the fundamental features of an empowering environment are occurring, then the strong relational construct in which this resides makes structure itself appear less important and only comes into focus in a culture where empowerment began to decline in noticeable ways.

It also seems true that the features of empowerment that surfaced in these three cases appear to be reasonably stable features in each case but the emphasis of different aspects depends on particular features within each case so that these features appear to be on a sliding scale of relationship and emphasis, while remaining present in each case.

5.5 Summary

Three organisations were the focus of this case study research. In type, they were a for-profit, a non-profit, and a church, all from west of the Mississippi River, and all of similar size. Primary data collection tools were surveys, interviews and focus groups with three levels of paid, full-time employees, namely, management, product, and support. The data was analyzed with a coding system and theory elaboration.

The results suggested that there were pre-conditions as part of sustaining an empowerment environment. The cases showed a view of people that was optimistic, that people aspire and can modify behaviour within a culture that has healthy relational features. Flexible systems were present in all the cases reflected in multiple options in fulfilling a responsibility, the lack of micromanaging, and flexible job descriptions. The leader in each case showed total commitment to an empowering environment and its values as fundamental to their view of people and themselves.

Four traits emerged as present while empowerment characteristics were being exercised. The traits of connectivity, trust, voice, and authentication were obvious in each case, though with small nuances of meaning and application

Leaders were considered to be in harmony with and promoting an empowering environment, if they were incarnational, meaning that they ‘walked the talk.’ This trait included valuing relationships, sharing responsibilities, listening, and being self-aware.

All employees considered empowerment a wise goal both from a personal as well as organisational vantage point. Their perspective of personal benefits could be appropriately arranged in three categories of dispositional, directional, and tangible. Dispositional terms included ‘happy’ and ‘confident.’ Directional aspects addressed the

desire of personnel to develop and increase capacity. Only the for-profit respondents mentioned tangible benefits like increased money or promotion. For others, the tangible benefits were connected to increased freedom and sense of well being. The primary organisational benefit was productivity mentioned in all three cases, as well as increased creativity and features link to it. Personnel at the church emphasized ‘mission,’ a term that did not surface in the other cases.

With few exceptions, respondents could quickly describe a time that they were disempowered. Those events emerged out of personal conflict or systemic causes most often connected with being deprived of ‘voice.’ The most common response was either physical or emotional detachment.

A potential theoretical concept emerging from the data is that organisations need to address aspects of leadership commitment to an empowerment construct, as well as flexible systems, and the organisation’s historical view of people, prior to the implementation of an empowerment strategy. Further, I suggest that to sustain an empowering environment exhibiting choice, competency, meaning, and impact, the organisation must be able to function in a relational way, exhibited by connectivity, voice, trust, and authentication. For that to be consistent, the leader must share responsibility, have a listening posture, and ‘walk the talk.’

If the above features are present it is the view of respondents that there will be significant personal and organisational benefits.

CHAPTER SIX

A THEORY OF EMPOWERMENT

6.1 Introduction

My autoethnographic account has expressed human aspects of how relationships and systems can impact individuals. The literature review suggests some unanswered questions in the pursuit of a portrait of a sustained empowering organisational environment. A series of case studies provided further accounts of organisations that are striving to be empowering environments. Emerging from the data are additional organisational realities that provide a larger and clearer, if tentative picture of the aspects of an empowering environment. This section is a dialogue of literature, my autoethnographic account and case study analysis in answer to the research questions with particular reference to the church.

6.2 A sustaining empowerment model

There are standard realities to any organized social system that we can discover in most books on management. Regardless of the level of complexity that develops the tasks and roles related to decision-making, leadership, conflict, group cohesion, motivation and performance, and communication are constants. Thus the elements of empowerment, namely, choice, competency, meaning, and impact must find their way into these frameworks and structures. But the ability of leaders and others to keep these traits embedded in the organisation appears to depend on two levels of commitments and behaviours that I have named ‘pre-conditions’ and ‘fertile soil.’ The characteristics that

allow a ‘crop’ to grow and be at home in a particular setting appear to be traits difficult to measure yet their presence or absence impacts the ability of an organisation to sustain the four empowering traits within a typical structure. I suggest that the four qualities that make up the ‘fertile soil’ are connectivity, trust, voice, and authentication.

These qualities themselves have elements. For example, connectivity involves appreciation, accessibility and support. Trust includes the absence of features like micromanaging but is also measured by being given more responsibility and being listened to and is often assessed from an employee viewpoint as the employee watches how leadership and management treat others. Voice or having one’s views solicited and being present to the organisation signifies for many, authentic collaboration. And authentication is the signal to everyone that their behaviour can be calibrated by the declarations of the organisation and its leaders that it and they do in fact aspire to an empowering environment. These signals include a leader that ‘walks the talk,’ that is self-aware, that invites voice, that consistently displays a particular view of people, in short a leader that functions out of a highly relational construct.

These traits rest in a pre-conditional climate with three features. The first is a particular view of people. The view of people that is suggested by the data includes the perspective that hardwired into a person unless some choice, event, or history has damaged it are the traits of aspiring, the capacity for growth and improvement, the desire of place and visibility, and the urge to contribute. Elements that are part of the organizational systems, values, and leadership determine whether those individual traits have a welcoming place to surface. Second, a total commitment on the part of leaders that consistently displays behaviour communicating that these leaders authentically must

behave in this manner and with these values to be true to their identity. The third is flexibility in communication and decision-making that need not flow to every dimension of the organisation but must be evident enough so that inflexibility is not a barrier to any new initiative or effort designed to establish and sustain an empowering environment. Without flexibility the price of empowerment simply gets too high right at the beginning before there is any payout. People will begin to jump ship and others will begin to quickly resist.

6.3 The features of the 'pre-conditions'

A study of 167 companies by Lieberman and O'Connor (1972) looked at several external features that impacted organisational performance. One of the traits was the inherited characteristics of the organisation. Keys and Foster-Fishman (1997, 345-346) tell of a case where there was a good faith effort to implement empowerment but leadership could not foster the 'pre-conditions' for empowerment and distrust overwhelmed the process. In a comparison of a non-profit and a for-profit organisation the deciding differences were not related to the profit status but rather that one had a leader who was relational, invited participation, and led an organization that had an operational history marked by flexibility (Silver, Randolph and Seibert 2006, 47, 55-57). Organisations will spontaneously develop cultures in the sense of network of patterns with distinctive kinds of social actions and ways of thinking (Meckler 2011, 443). Organizational culture is a way of describing the transformation of a group of individually competent hires into a functioning whole that prefer some ways of handling transactions over others (Peterson 2011, 417). Schein (2000, xxix) suggests that

articulating a new vision or values is a 'waste of time' if they are not calibrated against existing assumptions and values. This reflects the difficulty in changing significant aspects of long held patterns and belief systems in organisations even if they are not productive in a positive sense. Alvesson (2011, 14) notes that this culture involves 'shared meanings' that have been negotiated. It is these 'shared meanings' that enable actors to act in collaboration (Haugaard 2003, 87). This process develops a kind of loyalty rising out of the reality that such patterns or shared meanings become part of an individual's perceived identity and to attempt to change these patterns is to attack them. The reality of pre-conditions suggests that the empowerment process is more fragile and uncertain than someone would portray. Collins (1999, 209) notes that Wilkinson highlights the lack of literature on implementation processes which suggests an incomplete view of empowerment that trivializes potential conflicts and ignores contextual issues, assuming a nearly universalist mentality that empowerment is appropriate everywhere at all times.

Research would suggest that organisations do have 'inherited features' that are not always planned as parts of the culture develop spontaneously and that once established these traits are difficult to change. Thus an organisation can evaluate what kind of organisation it is and whether it would naturally accept the processes and values of an empowerment environment. It is apparent that this process is fragile and requires attentiveness not simply as something being done along side of the 'real' business of the organisation but something essential to the real business the organisation.

It is noted that only human relations type cultures and climates may tend to 'choose to dedicate time to learning processes allowing them to improve their

effectiveness' (West and Richter 2011, 252-253). So the question becomes, 'What kind of organisation are we?'

This is in harmony with my autoethnographic accounts. In my family of origin the inherited trait was the preeminence of image. In the church denomination of my childhood the inherited trait was an internal focus so much so that incompetence was immaterial to the fundamental purposes of the organisation. These features seemed invisible not because they could not be seen but because they were viewed as reality, the way the world worked. Change would ultimately have to address these 'invisible' pre-conditions. But the power these features carried was immense as they touched me.

It seems plausible that the features essential for whatever the organisation is trying to implement will vary depending on the goal. This research is suggesting that for an empowering environment to find a footing in the organisation the three features of a full commitment of leadership and influential actors along with flexible organisational systems and a positive view of people are essential. West and Richter (2011, 257-259) reveal that while there is moderate support for the proposition that the social interaction of employees as they endeavor to make sense of what is happening has some impact on organisational climate, significant research findings do not reflect a strong connection between structural issues other than leadership and the climate of the organisation. However other research suggests that the individual qualities of participants do impact the empowerment process. Research suggests that the individual mindset of a middle-manager with low self-esteem, job affect, or social support tends to limit his or her efforts to change themselves and this has little positive impact on the organisation (Spreitzer and Quinn 1996, 237).

Flexibility is a feature highlighted in these case studies. Collins notes that flexibility is a concept which is extremely difficult to define. No one is 'against' flexibility- it is as difficult to support 'rigidity and conservatism as it is to support autocracy.' But flexibility is a contradictory and controversial concept which is limited in its potential application. Just as supporters of involvement can still see a role for managerial prerogative, so do the advocates of 'flexibility' see the benefits of 'inflexible' rules and institutions (Collins 1999, 215). The superleader, noted by Huczynski and Buchanan (2010, 717) is able to 'lead others to lead themselves.' It is the antithesis of powerlessness which is the lack of autonomy and participation (Ashforth 1989, 207)

Empowerment according to Cattaneo and Chapman (2010) promotes the recognition of power and capabilities that individuals already possess. Bandura when speaking of self-efficacy notes the social context in which it occurs and that there are opportunities, obstacles, and restrictions in one's environment that have an impact on one's beliefs about what can be accomplished (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010). When I commented while walking with a friend that I was weaving around the sidewalk trying to get out of people's way, it was a way of viewing myself and the world that would have to be addressed if I was to participate in an empowering culture. Yet, when faced with a crisis in my marriage, my view of my vocation and my view of myself I responded with courage and purposefulness suggesting that people have significant personal resources to act creatively and purposefully. This positive view of people is at the core of an empowering environment. There would seem to be a correlation between this positive view of people, if authentically held by leadership, and the potential for flexible structures.

But these three pre-conditions as a group suggest another feature. Only self-reflexive organisations and leaders can ensure that these features are present and will stay present. Since culture and meaning are being established spontaneously and continuously in the organisation this self-reflexive feature must be iterative. Patton (2002, 41) suggests that we must be able to see it to own it. Yet blindness is a common feature of people and organisations. One of the most perplexing aspects of my life has been my inability to see features of my life that had enormous impact on my choices and direction. The church of my origin has lived in smallness while espousing a different value for years. Another church organisation I have been involved in is driven by a love of its history and it has inhibited the organisation. I did not see that I was driven by image and I behaved as if powerless and abdicated my views and preferences because of it. If a person or organisation cannot see what drives them then they are not trustworthy for they cannot predict when a particular set of circumstances will erupt an historically embedded drive and behaviour will take an unexpected turn. If the ego of the leader or the history of the organisation or some other cause prevents an organisation from being self-reflexive, then it cannot move forward to be an empowering environment.

6.4 The Nature of the 'fertile soil'

Authentication is about identity and credibility. Participants in one study agreed that credibility was the most important and defining characteristic of effective managers (Posner and Kouzes 1993, 277). Credibility, arising from being trustworthy and functioning out of a coherent philosophy impacts levels of identification and shared values in employees (Posner and Kouzes 1993, 277). Integrity is seen as the most

important quality a leader can have (Jones and Moser 2001, 120). At the core of authentication is 'walking the talk.' It is noted that a leader's example setting can alter the behaviour of others (Jones and Moser 2001, 120). It was this feature that set my life on a different path. I tried to look honestly at the gap between rhetoric and action, between stated values and values as demonstrated by behaviour and I could not bridge the gap with the approach to reality that I possessed. In three settings I experienced the dissonance generated by discourse that was not in harmony with behaviour. I was, in virtually all settings, told I was valued, yet when I spoke in contradiction to the official discourse I experienced not only challenge but relational exclusion. The leaders and organisations had a course and to disagree with it or suggest modification or augmentation based on outcomes was not only viewed as a bad idea but rather an attack. When my friend asked, 'What do you want?' I realized no one had ever been interested in that before, including me. No organisation I was part of cared what I wanted. It had its agenda which served its survival. Authentication in relation to empowerment strategy places a supreme view on coherence.

The power of connectivity is dramatic. In each of the three focus groups there was animated discussion concerning communication for competence. This passion reflected the deeply held desire to do a good job. Knowledge is power and shared and accurate knowledge is empowering. It increases the sense of competence and this sense of control over one's work results in increased job satisfaction (Gill 2006, 214-216, 227). Accepting the personhood of each member rather than just their role and helping each member know they are understood are significant factors are features of inclusion (Yukl 1993, 30). Peter Block suggests that, 'All we know about learning, exceptional

performance and creativity indicate that the existence of a supportive community is what makes the difference' (Block 2009). People in an organisation need to be understood at their psychological, most basic human level in order to be wisely enabled and rewarded (Kets de Vries and Engellau 2010, 188-192). It would appear on the surface that this produces complexity but in a relational setting it simply demonstrates concern. For example, when I went to a Bible camp as a very young boy, to ask me in an unfamiliar setting to get up in front of a large group of strangers and sing suggests a staggering level of disassociation between my lived experience and those who were in authority. Surely someone could have determined that such an event could be a devastating experience for someone so young fraught with the potential for embarrassment and humiliation. But the program had been set. When people are treated positively they make better contributions and as they do so such behaviour impacts others to do well (Wilderom 2011, 79).

Voice becomes a greater essential with knowledge workers along with a 'need to contribute' (Yukl 1993, 5,76). This affirmation of identity is said this way by Moustakas in Yukl (1993, 172) when he states that humans possess the 'potentiality for creative living, for participating in interhuman experience on an authentic basis while maintaining a distinctive and unique individuality.'

The significance of trust as an ethical feature in the organisational environment impacts the sense within employees that they are doing meaningful work (Cardador and Rupp 2011, 171). The supportive environment that we are talking about involves 'positive social interactions' and results in enhanced effectiveness, reduced job stress, increased learning, increased communication, and greater satisfaction (West and Richter 2011, 254). West and Richter (1990 cited in West and Richter 2011, 253) use W. A.

Kahn's definition of trust to suggest that the employee is 'able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.' This safety allows the employee to enter into 'decision-making and task execution with full engagement,' confident to be themselves. My life experience in the church is that the display of my authentic or chosen self often puts me at risk. There can be only one answer to this, that the purposes of the organisation are at odds with my purposes. Yet trust is seen in the case studies as behaviour with my interests in mind and is displayed by a willingness to listen.

It can be said that even as these traits are identified with supporting evidence, a 'positively charged organisation' is still not a utopian. There can be sloppy practice (Wilderom 2011, 79). Schein challenges the lack of specificity around what kind of behaviour is termed 'positive' (Schein 2011, xiii). Employees have the ability to have independent views and a capacity for reflection. And it is unsettling to some that empowerment and participation schemes emerge through particular conditions of exchange and struggle between independent people in 'dynamic conditions where outcomes cannot be assured' (Beirne 2006, 14-15, 26). Because this reflects an unstable picture, managers have often been champions of empowerment only during opportunistic times without any qualms of abandoning it if the environment changed (Beirne 2006, 13). Empowerment impacts the balance of power.

Taken as a group, authentication, connectivity, trust, and voice are about relational maturity. Not only is this construct highly relational it is about a significant level of maturity. Authentication is an incarnational modeling that is dependable and embodies the organisation's values. Its absence opens people and the organisation to

opportunistic behaviour and the fear of being defrauded is real. Connectivity is about mutuality and belonging. Without it the individual is isolated. Voice gives value and its opposite is indifference, a devaluing, as if not present. To trust is to create a net of safety so action and risk can be taken. Without it betrayal, something everyone has experienced, becomes a haunting possibility again.

It is noticeable when reading the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, as he describes the features of authentic love, they fall naturally into the categories of humility, caring for others, and dependability or predictability. The statements in the case studies outline just such an environment and they are articulated in the four traits of 'fertile soil.' Without this maturity, rather than authentication we would get impulsiveness, rather than trust there would be abuse, rather than voice, selfishness and rather than connectivity there would be fickleness. These traits are more reflective of an adolescent.

6.5 Leadership styles and empowerment goals

There are three intrinsic leadership traits and three external results that seem to be in harmony aspiring to an empowering environment. The first intrinsic reality is a healthy ego which includes self awareness including an understanding of their 'dark side,' a willingness to laugh at one's self, not be easily threatened by other people's ideas and some reasonable level of transparency shown in a willingness to admit failure. Self-reflexiveness may be essential for people in order to develop as leaders (Avolio 2010). Self-awareness is considered by some scholars as one of the underlying pillars of empowerment (Gill 2006, 215). It is the starting point of leadership development,

because a common barrier to leadership development is the person himself or herself. The barrier is emotional and connected to their history and self-perception (Gill 2006, 220, 277-278; Goffee and Jones 2005, 92) Leaders are what they are and lead the way they do in great measure due to their early development (Kets de Vries and Engellau 2010, 188). 'Leadership demands the expression of an authentic self,' states Goffee and Jones (2005, 87). It is a quality others must attribute to you (Goffee and Jones 2005, 88). Further a leader is 'obsessive about embodying his beliefs' (Goffee and Jones 2005, 89).

The second is a particular view of people as cited above, that people aspire, can increase and desire to increase capacity to grow and improve, possessing a desire for place and visibility and an urge to contribute. It results in leadership that embraces as a primary responsibility giving attention to the development of people in their identity, assisting them in gaining meaning from their work, and responding to their need for attachment or connectedness (Gill 2006, 148). I return to the autoethnographic account of my early childhood when I bought a briefcase though I did not really know anyone with a briefcase. I filled it with paper and pens and would not sleep over at someone's house without my briefcase. It was a picture of the world I yearned for, yet I experienced no leader outside of school, through my first thirty years that championed, fostered or even inquired about that trait. Worse, the values of learning, writing and professionalism that were captured by that simple act were actually dismissed as potentially dangerous. This seems the opposite of how leaders should function. Kegan and Lahey (2010, 774-778) reveal surprising research that explores the capacity of adults to consistently develop their mental complexity. People move through three stages in their ability to think critically. The first is the socialized mind shaped by personal environment, then the self-authoring

mind characterized by the ability to have an individual and internal ‘seat of judgment’ and finally a self-transforming mind where one is able to discern and embrace the limitations of their own views. Kegan and Lahey suggest that this process can actually go on into late adulthood as the adult expands their reasoning capacities.

The third intrinsic trait is a relationally driven model of reality and achievement. This does not mean a leader needs to be highly skilled at relating to people as in being friendly. Rather it is the ability and willingness to identify with those whom he or she has leadership over, to work side by side, to know what they need to excel and to see people as a solution before a problem or as an asset before an expense. By relational I mean that the leader sees the employee not just as a moveable part like a piece of machinery that can produce particular results but in a more dynamic way, that the employee can be molded, worked with and interacted with in a way that increases for the employee and the organisation positive results. It suggests (Gill 2006, 8), that the normative question of leadership is ‘How should leaders treat followers’ (Gill 2006, 8)? Burns (1978, 116) says it this way: ‘One talent all leaders must possess [is] the capacity to perceive needs of followers in relationship to their own, to help followers move toward fuller self-realization and self-actualization along with the leaders themselves.’ My experience in the freshman classroom with an algebra teacher that was hostile to any question he did not feel had worth had the result in me of going silent which impacted my grades. Yet the young trigonometry teacher who welcomed questions reduced my fear of embarrassment and so I asked questions and received high grades. In one piece of research workers in the United Kingdom had a common view of leadership that involved skills in creating a ‘fertile, supportive environment’ being ‘sensitive’ to the needs of both

internal and external stakeholders (Gill 2006, 211). When the leader focused on group needs the group was able to focus on task with less anxiety (Yukl 1993, 26). Lord (1976, 92-93) sees a correlation between a leader's willingness to give meaning and context that fulfills a socio-emotional function which if absent produces negative behaviours in employees. They are threatened by fear or a lack of role clarity or a loyalty to established ways or the threat of underperforming (Lowe 1994, 23, 24).

These three intrinsic features are matched by three extrinsic activities. The first is behaviour that authenticates the rhetoric that the leadership aspires to empower people. This behaviour happens to a degree that suggests to the employee that the leader cannot be true to himself or herself without behaving and believing in this way. Knowing, doing and being are suggested as three aspects of a leader's persona. Knowing or cognitive abilities, doing or behavioural and skills traits, and being or identity-based leadership are all important but there is a renewed emphasis on a leader's self-perception (Ibarra, Snook and Gamo 2010). A leader's ability to function authentically out of true identity is the second extrinsic trait and often reveals itself by the general absence of micromanaging. It is recognized that there will be a healthy tension between 'freedom and constraint,' which may vary depending on the setting (Posner and Kouzes 1993, 247). This trait more than any other was suggested as a sign that empowerment was actual and not theoretical. The final trait was the behaviour of trust as differentiated from the attitude of trust. Behaviour means giving responsible tasks and listening to others. A lack of trust is seen as the greatest enemy of empowerment and a result of such trust is connected to voice.

The intrinsic and external features of perceived empowering leadership focus almost entirely on the personal disposition including the attitudes and values of the leader

and relational aptitudes and skills. Very little was mentioned about general competence within a given industry and organisation as if competence was a given.

While it may not be true that these leadership traits can fit into any leadership theory two things seem relevant. First, employees generally feel that the above qualities can inhabit in any number of leadership styles and their correlating theories.

The response of leadership theory to the case study findings is problematic at a number of levels. One is the multitude of definitions of leadership and a second is the plethora of leadership theories. Bennis says there are ‘something like 276 definitions of leadership,’ and Bass suggests there are over 1,500 definitions (Gill 2006, 4-9). Covey (2004, 352-358) outlines 24 theories about leadership some of which overlap and Gill notes that Gareth Edwards counted some forty theories of leadership (Gill 2006, 8). Such a wide sweep of theories and definitions from disciplines ranging from sociology, psychology, organizational studies, economic, political science and history suggests there is a less clear foundation within academic circles of what leadership means. Yukl suggests there is ‘great confusion’ surrounding leadership studies (Yukl 1981, 438-439). The emphasis of a given grouping of leadership theories can be tracked historically. Early focus was on the inherited traits of a leader, the great man theory era. But data suggests that there is a weak relationship between personality and leadership (Gill 2006, 39). This was followed by an emphasis on behaviours of a leader in the 1950s then the power-influence theories exploring the processes between leaders and followers. Attention shifted to situational and contingencies theories more recently (Yukl 1981, 11-15; Jones and Moser 2001). But Gill (2006, 60) notes scholars suggest that there have been ‘several thousand empirical studies’ on the topic of leadership with results that are

contradictory and inconclusive. Given the profusion of studies on leadership, there is a search today for more integrated theories (Covey 2002, 352). There is even a group of scholars suggesting that the wide and contradictory research suggests a different conclusion that leadership is mostly mythological, a construct rising from particular cultures and that the role of leadership is mostly impotent and that further studies suggest that organisational performance is mostly determined by factors outside any one person's control (Nehria and Khurana 2010, 8-9; Thomas 1988). However, in Britain, the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership noted a 'direct link between leadership capability and sustained high performance.' Never the less there is other data suggesting the research methods used in numerous studies call into question the reliability of such a statement (Gill 2006, 13,22). Further, theories like the contingency theory lead one to the conclusion that there is no best or ideal style (Gill 2006, 47). Some research suggests a positive relationship between leadership styles and job performance and job satisfaction but other studies suggest just the opposite (Gill 2006, 45; Yukl 1981, 160-161). Some scholars suggest that with all the theories many struggle to find their relevance to the working world (Thompson and Beak 2007, 279). One conclusion could be that seeking a universal leadership model is not reasonable partly because of the vast amount of variables involved. Those variables could include the personality type of the leader, the history and personality of the organisation, the place in the organisation's life-cycle that the organisation is situated, the type of goals the organisation is seeking to reach, the type of organisation it is seeking to be, and various external environmental factors.

The direction of leadership models is moving from differences between leaders and employees to merging motives, desires, and values (Sullivan and Decker 2009, 53).

Such an approach seems to also increase the leader's influence over the commitment of others in implementing organisational goals (Yukl 1993, 442). It would appear that with such a model it would involve the leader giving up power, though some argue that power sharing actually multiplies power. In transformational leadership there is a heightened sense of both empowerment and dependence (Gill 2006, 211, 224; Chen and Shamir 2003, 246). Yet, as with all leadership models, one or more aspects seem to be emphasized at the expense of others. Some research suggests that 'leadership processes cannot be understood apart from the dynamics of the social system in which they are embedded' (Dachler 1984 cited in Yukl 1993, 446). It is even the view of a number of respondents that they have seen leaders come and go with a myriad of leadership styles and they did not see a strong or necessary relationship between an empowering leader and a particular style. Rather the view is that there are four aspects, the leadership, the followers, the tasks, and the environment. As a leader navigates all four of these, the empowering leader does so with a commitment to a certain set of dispositions, attitudes or values about himself or herself, people, and authenticity. The leader navigates with certain relational skills that generate a respectful and collaborative climate. Thus, regardless of the pervading style of the present leader to be empowering that leader must possess a small but significant set of values and a tool box of relational skills flexible yet essential to an empowering environment, differing in degrees from leader to leader and place to place but not in substance. The good news, according to Posner and Kouzes (1993, 275) is that best practices in leadership are not some gift from the gods but are a set of identifiable and learnable behaviors.

It is a caution that the applicability of the above traits arising from the case studies must not be taken as some universal traits and behaviours of leaders. Empirical support for such universal leader traits has been inconsistent and they further urge that the would be leader must respond to 'the meaning of leadership for each group with which he [or she] interacts' (Calder 1977, 202 cited in Kenney, Blascovich and Shaver 1994 425,427). For example, in studying leadership Thailand certain traits that the west would consider autocratic were not seen as that at all but an expected part of effective leadership, and thus without the negative and disempowering impact it would have in other places (Johnson 2007) Hunt (1967, 290) notes that some research suggests there are particular settings where autocratic leadership practices have produced effective work performance and other settings where human relationship oriented management has produced poor work performance.

Empowerment is about 'collective influence,' and a 'relational approach' (Beirne 2006, 1, 17). The empowerment process is relational and must have relevance and authenticity, 'grounded in the views, emotions, and collective experience of participants' (Beirne 2006, 88). This much can be said about what leadership style is compatible with an empowering environment.

Leaders should not underestimate the effect of the 'sense-making' for employees. This leadership behavior is often under-rated (Wilderom 2011, 80). This sense-making hinges on the 'incarnational modeling' of the leader. Noting that the traits mentioned in the case studies are personal and relational, people in the organisation expect to see these traits lived out in visible ways persistently and consistently. This 'walking the talk' tells those in the organisation that the leader has a strong rather than fragile ego. The level of

trust, the absence of micromanaging, the 'letting go' and the listening are relational features that are observed. They help the employee 'make sense' of this effort to empower. It is the CEO of the for-profit having an employee picnic even during the economic downturn communicating the value he or she placed in them. It is the CEO of the non-profit 'investing' trust in an employee as a way to build up confidence for a future endeavor. It is the CEO of the church being seen as 'predictably' who he or she is. This incarnational feature allows others to treat the behaviour of the leader as a landmark, a signpost. It gives direction.

6.6 Benefits assumed or real

It may be that often perception structures reality. However, in the immediate, it seems intriguing to consider if there is a way to determine whether the construct of empowerment as it is applied in an organisation can and does produce the benefits assumed throughout the interviews. While there was some variation, the general benefits assumed to accrue personally and organisationally seemed relatively stable.

The benefits to the person are more direct than the benefits to the organization. Everyone I talked to was a person but no one was an organisation.

The benefits to the person were described in two categories, dispositional and opportunistic. Dispositional qualities were those of well-being such as happy, confident, increased self-worth, not fearful or under undue stress. A sense of well-being as a consequence of employee perception that there is 'concern for employees' where they work, can result in the willingness of employees to participate in more strategically designed behaviours on behalf of the organisation (Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey 2011,

39). People respond in ways that reflect their personal history and the 'constraints of the situation' (Beirne 2006, 68). Bandura argues that personal well-being can arise from self-efficacy (Bandura 1994, 71). Though such an argument can be taken too far. Even Likert found that high morale did not always result in higher production (Jones and Moser 2001, 118). The opportunistic features were that if a person were empowered they would experience greater freedom, creativity, imagination, personal growth, or accumulatively the expansion of their capacities. Only in the for-profit organisation were the structural or tangible realities of increased income and promotion mentioned. The other personal and structural benefit that was mentioned was the removal of roadblocks.

The benefits to the organisation are viewed from the vantage point that the impact on the individual will have an added or residual benefit on the organisation. Employee empowerment results in increased output or productivity, more creatively, and greater versatility. The second benefit relates to the organisation's external standing. An empowering environment, by developing better employees with better skills should increase the reputation of the organisation. The third benefit is an issue of the internal culture. It is the organisation's expectation that empowering environments reduce the level of conflict. This feature if accurate may be in part because empowering environments display the importance of defining boundaries and second, that in an empowering environment people are not consistently fighting for space.

However, at the heart of a discussion on the proven and supposed benefits of an empowering environment is a deeper discussion about what is the purpose of empowerment. Is it an organisational process to improve production and profitability? Or is it a process implemented for more relational reasons, to give meaning to people's

work and express values that are transcendent (Gill 2006, 12,148). These two values, profit and people do not of necessity need to be in conflict but they often are, especially in more difficult economic times. Under pressure can they both stand secure? For example, one survey of successful executives revealed that they held strong views that a non-negotiable feature of enduring success includes a sense of achievement and contribution not only related to work goals but in helping people that one cares about and others, a sense of legacy (Gill 2006, 83 84). Much of the debate over the value of leadership in an organisation centers on the issue of organisational performance with many scholars suggesting that other and external conditions have a greater impact and some scholars defending the view that leaders do impact organisational performance (Podolny, Khurana and Besharov 2010, 65-68). But perhaps it is wrong to tie leadership so closely to organisational performance alone. Earlier scholars of leadership like Weber, Barnard and Selznik were concerned with leadership because of its capacity to infuse meaning and purpose into the lives of individuals (Podolny, Khurana and Besharov 2010, 69-74). Hackman (2010, 109) takes a slightly different approach but away from organisational performance. He says that the leader's ability to shape 'key contextual features' like organizational goals and culture or impact 'system viability' is vital. Some studies seem to suggest a relationship between empowerment strategies and job satisfaction and organisational performance but other research questions the strength of such a link (Gill 2006, 209, 218). Shared values and cultural norms are the first focus of a company that wants to be profitable (Gill 2006, 147). Regardless of where an organisation settles in defining the essentials of its existence, those essentials should be clear and articulated. In my autoethnographic accounts of my wife's illness, my

daughter's brush with the law, and my son's car accident, they all represented to me a threat to that which was of the first order in my life. First order features of our lives or our organisations are those things which we will not abandon regardless of changes in the environment without damage to our identity. They are those things that give us meaning. And in their absence business as usual is not an option for we are aware that we have lost part of ourselves.

Yet, the CEO in the for-profit case declared that one cannot argue that an organisation needs an empowering culture to thrive and make money and if such an environment is present a business plan that makes sense is still required. If that is not an essential feature and that feature cannot promise an economic outcome then why have it? Only if leaders and the organisation have answered that question will an empowerment environment be sustainable in the midst of the regular turn over of leaders in this mobile culture and the presence of external environmental features that put performance pressures on the organisation.

Another benefit of empowerment and positive work culture is 'interactive strength' and higher productivity as workers experience positive emotions within the organisation. Collaborative intelligence occurs through reciprocation of positive intra-individual phenomena, as felt by 'encouragement and gratitude, identity expansion, intra-psychological flexibility, cognitive broadening, or more meaningful reframing of played roles' (Wilderom 2011, 83).

Sackmann reviewed fifty-five empirical studies and found in the organisational culture-performance link, 'most studies found a direct linear relationship between organizational culture and performance.' And certain kinds of cultures have a positive

effect on financial as well as non-financial performance measures. Features of these cultures include openness, adaptive, goal oriented, high value on people, and innovative (Sackmann 2011). Often empowerment outcomes are conditional on other factors including economic, results are unevenly distributed and it appears impossible to create truly uniform corporate cultures. The 'formula' is simply too crude (Beirne 2006, 14, 65,67, 81). Though Schein argues that more precise meanings are needed before anything is proven (Schein 2011, xii). Empowerment involves power and the weakness of empowerment application is often that power is not seen as ambiguous, contested or problematic. It is a process of negotiation and the results cannot be associated with fully predictable and inevitable results. A more 'sophisticated conceptualization' is needed (Beirne 2006, 10-12).

It is suggested that a final benefit is that organisations that permit participation produce employees who are responsible to participate (Beirne 2006, 3). When an employee feels that their personal goal facilitation is enhanced through work then there is a positive association between that and an employee's sense of well-being (Doest, Mares, Gebhardt and Koelewign 2006, 192).

After one of the most devastating seasons of my life I and my family moved to a town in eastern Montana in the United States. I had lost confidence in myself and in my abilities. But in that season, at a church I was serving there were five men who thought their organisation was most fortunate to have brought me to them. They were consistent in their relational and organisational support. It was transforming. To this day, some twenty years later they stay in touch with me though I have long since moved. Their behaviour to me was empowering. It affirmed something in me. It gave me part of

myself I could not reach on my own. To be sure there were wise choices on my part but a significant part of the recipe of my personal renewal was found in their unfettered commitment to support who I was and could be.

6.7 The church

Greenleaf (1997, 218) suggests that in many ways ‘as an institution, [the church] seems not unlike other institutions with other missions. The churches, too, seem troubled to find how best to do what they have set out to do.’ Many churches have failed, as many other organisations have failed by taking a one size fits all strategy in a culture that values diversity and where customization is almost essential (Barna 1998, 51). But the church is fundamentally not only an institution but a relational body that gains power by strengthening the relational nature of the congregation (Linthicum, 2005, 305, 306). Unfortunately many pastors did not enter this calling for the sake of relationships. Sixty-nine percent see their primary strength and purpose to be preaching and teaching (Barna 1998, 38) This causes frustration in some quarters because people declare they want strong, visionary leadership which isn’t what attracted pastors to this occupation (Barna 2001, 19). Yet Cordeiro suggests that one of the three primary features that empower the church is that functioning as it should, it is a community with free interchange, open fellowship, and genuine relationships (Cordeiro 2001, 202-206). Within this community the church naturally sees people as possessing gifts that should be ‘explored, discovered, claimed, nurtured, and shared’ (Stewart III 2001, 60-65). Spikla (1970, 175) notes that the ‘theologians of the great religions have, at their core, maintained images of man that stress growth, freedom, capability, and action.’ So the empowerment model outlined

above fits the local church well as it contextualizes its ministry, seeing people as those with capacity, and empowerment functioning in a highly relational environment.

Yet, despite that, Greenleaf's observation remains disquieting. Numerical analysis alone reveals that the overwhelming number of congregations have around seventy-five in weekend attendance and have hovered around that number for years. What could account for such a stalemate? Such a piece of research adds questions as much as answers them, and I suggest an avenue for further research along these lines. The previous insights have presented a social environment that has these features. There are pre-conditions that present an organisation highly committed to a self-reflexive posture. The traits of a 'fertile soil' are not only relational but require an organisation marked by relational maturity. The leadership can be described as incarnational where the leader in disposition and behaviour is the embodiment of the empowerment values of the organisation, living them out for all to see. The benefits are significance affirming in focus rather than simply bottom line in reference to numbers and profits. But many churches in the United States are often none of these. They are driven by a number of features. I suggest three. Many local congregations are membership exclusive. I do not use the word membership here to mean a formal membership but rather what it takes to be considered a member of the group. Group membership is driven by conformity requirements particularly in behaviour and ideology. This conformity builds safety into the group. Second, the local congregation is ideologically driven. While the empowerment features are highly relational this is not the glue that holds many local congregations together. In many churches in the evangelical wing of North American Protestantism the center of faith could be argued to be a book rather than a person (Peter

Holmes, pers. comm.). This generates whether intentionally or not, a controlling posture. Sureness becomes a god. However, it is in line with the above fact that most pastors enter the occupation to preach and teach. A third feature is ‘spiritualizing reality.’ This trait generates a blindness that keeps the congregation from seeing another or alternate reality (Johnson 1972).

Thus, while a healthy empowerment structure is self-reflexive and relationally mature with primary leaders incarnationally modeling these two features, those features are weak in some local congregations. Both of these behaviours are mature behaviours. Let us return to Kegan and Lahey’s research (2010, 774-778) as they explaining the maturity of critical thinking. In stage one a person’s critical thinking is shaped by their environment, relationships and norms. In stage two the person enters the self-authoring stage where they create a ‘seat of judgment’ and evaluate, discard, and own for themselves their belief system. In stage three, the self-transforming stage the person is able to stand outside of themselves and embrace the limitations of their own system as well as commendable features of other systems that they do not entirely embrace. Often North American congregations reward only stage one critical thinking. What is the implication? It is that the empowerment construct requires an organisation of people acting in mature ways while many local churches have structured themselves to sustain immaturity, only rewarding socialized critical thinking. It disqualifies itself for an empowering environment by its accepted patterns. In contrast the case study church provided constant references to ‘fulfilling a mission.’ While the three features of many congregations are internally focused this congregation was oriented externally and toward action.

6.8 Contradictions and surprises

Before going into my summary it is worth noting a few contradictions and surprises that have come out of this research. The most notable contradiction arising from the case studies was the weakness of training since competence is a primary trait of psychological empowerment. It did not seem problematic to those in leadership positions, but was seen and felt differently by those who were not. There is not enough data to provide a clear reason for this absence. One could argue that since these organisations and the people in them felt they were empowered that training was not actually part of empowerment. But since all three cases emphasized performance issues I do not believe this can be the case. It is also true that not all features of an empowering setting need to be perfectly present for the social setting to be empowering. But it would appear from leadership statements that the most likely cause is the very positive view of people translating into a near overconfidence in an employee's ability to just figure it out. One leader does not have job descriptions but rather hires a person to oversee an area and in that leader's view, if the person is a good hire they will figure out what has to be done. This high view of people may also result in an apprentice model of training rather than more formal styles. Leaders may perceive this type of training as the best style in harmony with their view of people. Employees who need training may not recognise it as such.

A second reason could be that in all three cases the primary leader was entrepreneurial and such leaders tend away from organisational maintenance issues to the next new or productive action or item. So training would often not have the glitz and

glamour that energize entrepreneurial leaders. Yet even here there are people in the organisation who are meant to oversee proper training so again we are left with a quandary. This area would warrant further research.

There were a number of surprises to this researcher. First was the familiar terminology used by all three cases and the relative similarity in outlook with only marginal differences in how people regardless of organisation or rank in the organisation expressed their perceived realities. The emphasis on voice was intriguing. These cases revealed employees who expected to be visible, to have a voice, to be present to the organisation, and to be welcomed to the table. The primary result when voice was inappropriately denied was alienation. The significance given to leaders who are self-aware was prominent. It suggested that employees understood the risks involved in empowered action, and a self-aware leader was one guarantee that the employee could act without undue fear of harm. Yet in all three cases employees viewed their leaders as sometimes acting with a strongly top down decision-making model and did not see it as a contradiction or a threat to being personally empowered.

Since the three cases were of three types each type had one or more topics unique to it. The for-profit was the only case where a benefit of empowerment included promotion and financial gain. While actual organisational structure was given little importance in any of the cases that topic did arise in the non-profit. This was interesting in that more than the other two cases, the employees of the non-profit spoke the most of freedom and collegial activity so perhaps structure gave them security as they functioned with such great freedom. Further, in that those in the three cases reflected the highly relational dynamics of an empowering environment, structure may be viewed as a

secondary issue if the relational dynamics are healthy. Employees in the case of the church were the only ones who mentioned fulfilling a sense of mission and the meaning that comes with it. It was also this case in which employees listed enthusiasm as an important leadership trait.

6.9 Summary

Why is it so difficult to implement and sustain an empowering culture? Because a sustained organisational history may have entrenched features that are not welcoming to empowerment qualities and those features must be addressed prior to implementation. Another reason is because sustaining an empowering culture requires a highly relational environment. Leadership needs to emulate this relational culture and the determining issues of leadership empowerment rest largely not on skills but on dispositional and relational qualities. Employees did not consider a particular leadership style as essential to the task. Finally both in organisational and leadership values, economic bottom line performance must be considered as no more important than human features that answer the question, 'In what kind of place do we want to work?' This organisation displays that there are other realities that are just as important as bottom line economic performance. If this bottom line emphasis is not on the 'kind of place' just as much as economic performance then when there are market and cultural shifts or changes in the expectations of constituents, or even leader turnover, then the commitment to an empowering environment is easily lost.

Beyond the above description, an organisation that desires to be empowering must display maturity. It must be a self-reflexive organisation, led by self-reflexive leaders. It

must exhibit relational maturity. The leader must have achieved a level of maturity that allows him or her to function with incarnational integrity. This 'maturity' feature moves empowerment out of the category of organisational technique which leads to the concluding issues in my final chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction

It is the primary view of this research, that if one is looking for why the success rate of empowerment efforts is so low, the place to look is not in the hardware of the organisation but the software, the traits and qualities that are often invisible, hard to define and even harder to measure, because in part empowerment rests within the nature of persons. Certain human qualities are required in the organisation for empowerment dynamics to surface and be at home. It is also suggested that the pre-conditions, traits, and leadership styles are marked by maturity. It is this maturity that motivates the organisation to be reflexive about its history and developing cultures and the consequences in social and formal structure of the enterprise. It enables the organisation to maintain a humble posture so that it can be continuously learning and growing. In the fast pace of American and worldwide organisational activity spawned by technological advances many of us could not have imagined, this reflexive posture is even more important. Things, important things, can get easily lost at such a speed. It is the relational maturity of the organisation that keeps the importance and capacity of people in view, helping the entire operation from defaulting to tasks and deadlines until that is all that is visible. These two features are solidified by an incarnational leader whose identity is not only a signpost but an anchor tethering the organisation to its values. In this configuration the identity hospitality that marks a healthy relational environment becomes a natural consequence.

In this chapter I will first address practical considerations and the limitations of this research. Then I will conclude by using a series of questions to reflect on the nature and implications of this research journey both personally and organisationally.

7.2 Further considerations and limitations of research

This research involved both personal experience in the form of autoethnographies, as well as case studies in three types of organisations. The number of each precludes any strong declarations of causality within a category of organisation, that the empowerment construct arrived at is eminently essential to that organisation type. For example, using only one non-profit prevents the research from saying this is always and essentially the empowerment construct for non-profits of this size with these variables. However, a quality that showed up in the case study data was the rather high level of similarity in the use of terms that describe this empowerment reality. This suggests that an accurate view of empowerment is that it is a human construction that many have in common. As the CEO of one case suggested, it is ‘hardwired’ into their fundamental make-up.

I believe that this research, based in part on three organisations with some similarities yet also significant dissimilarities, can say that their type does not preclude this empowerment construct and that further, such differences in organisations does not automatically assume that each requires a different empowerment model.

This has particular application to church and congregation. People in this category of organisation have a tendency to see their organisation as ‘different than’ other organisations with the suggestion that these differences mean among other things, that the elements or dynamics that govern how ‘ordinary’ organisations operate do not apply to them. In fact, it appears, without diminishing many of the unique features of a protestant

congregation in the United States, that at least in this research, the staff and leaders of the congregation used the same language, meanings, and constructs as those in the other organisations. For example, there was virtually no difference in the understanding of disempowerment regardless of organisation. If there was a difference it might be that those in the religion organisation appeared more forgiving, less likely to immediately begin considering eventual detachment. But even this feature was so muted as to suggest that more research would be needed in order to rest on such a proposition. Having completed the research it also strikes me that there are three other issues that could benefit from further research.

7.2.1 How to make the invisible visible

At any given point in an organisation's history it would seem that the organisation must decide what external and visible behaviours incarnate the invisible reality and then determine how they will be measured and evaluated. Only external realities can be consistently measured in the flux and flow of a constantly changing organisation, with personnel rotating in and out. Not only do the behaviours need to be quantified in some way that fits with the organisational culture but the assumed benefits need to be as well. Nothing that takes considerable effort will usually be sustained unless many can articulate why 'we are better off because of it.' Leadership may decide that the goal of empowerment for their organisation has less to do with the financial bottom line or how much expansion can be managed, but rather in what kind of place do they want to work? If the latter becomes a tangible goal, then it will have traits and those traits can have behaviours and measurements. The measurements must match the goals so the kinds of

measurements used for financial goals may not be accurate for goals that are more qualitative like creativity or increased confidence.

An unwillingness to develop this 'invisible to visible' process may well doom the enterprise for it would seem in settings with constant change many features that people and the organisation aspire to will get lost. The effort to quantify is not just about measurement it is about generating visibility.

7.2.2 Sliding scale

The goal of this research was not to look for or suggest a cookie cutter model of empowerment that will appear identical and sit the same in each organisation. Organisations have personalities developed by people, history, decisions, and previous behaviour among other causes. While a number of these features like the pre-conditions seem essential, how they are implemented, how they look, and their balance in relation to other traits will vary. This variance is not seen as a necessary roadblock to an empowering environment.

7.2.3 Realistic expectations

Is it worth it? That depends of the type of organisation the people in the organisation want. What kind of air do they want to breath? What kind of people do they want to attract and retain? What kind of place does the industry require? And these are just a few of the questions. In case three it was mentioned that this environment requires attention to a particular hiring strategy that attracts and invites this kind of person who wants responsibility and growth among the other benefits. This may seem

like a circular argument that hiring empowered people makes the organisation empowering. It is true that some people may come into a work environment not aware of latent skills and desires that are part of their make-up and that relationships within the organisation awaken those capacities. It is also true that not all people will chose this type of environment for any number of personal reasons. If it is an empowering environment then that choice must be honored. To alert people early on that this is the type of 'place' to which they are applying seems realistic. Empowerment may have lofty goals but it must maintain a footing in the real world dynamics of human systems.

It can be adequately argued that an enterprise does not have to be empowering to reach goals, make money or be successful in the traditional use of the word. And even with an empowering environment, a for-profit company, for example, still has to have a workable business plan. So why invest? This question must be asked and answered by the organisation prior to implementation and is part of the pre-conditions. If leadership has a particular view of people that it holds without wavering, then an empowering environment is an ultimate expression of that reality. Never the less it is understood that both the autoethnographies and the case studies are situated descriptions and further research would be needed before broader generalisations could be claimed.

7.3 A personal and professional journey

This research has been an odyssey of discovery, not only at an academic level but personally and professionally. The earlier cited goals of evocative autoethnography were: (a) to invite the reader in, (b) generate new understanding and increased coherence for the researcher, (c) motivate action beyond analysis and (d) make visible the

‘complexities and difficulties; in other words give a layered, complex view of the human experience’ (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 747). In this section I will endeavor to accomplish those four goals through answering a series of questions.

What have been the features of my personal and conceptual journey as I have gone through the research process?

My personal journey motivated my research. I had experienced significant episodes of disempowerment and saw that pattern repeated in people and organisations around me. My conscious drive was to discover the techniques, the principles of how to empower. But in the pursuit of this academic and practical goal I discovered that I still carry elements of that disempowerment with me yet and it surfaced repeatedly in my research text. I was constantly writing tentatively, using phrases like ‘if the above data seems reliable’ and ‘it would seem.’ I tenaciously hid behind the authority of other scholars, hiding my personal views, leaving only scraps occasionally laying around in the text. I did not ‘see’ because I thought I had dealt with the residue of disempowerment from my history. I did not see it because I had chosen two responses to my disempowerment. The first was to perform for others. The second was to choose to let other authority protect me. This behaviour makes plain that I went into the research without owning the power of my own voice and the authority of my own identity. My academic supervisor challenged me again and again not to hide. It was unnerving. The detachment that comes from being disempowered is not only a detachment from others or an organisation but often includes a detachment from one’s self. I learned that identity is relational and just as significantly, there are parts of me that I can only reach as someone else gives them to me. MacMurray puts it this way, ‘All meaningful action is for the sake

of friendship,' and personal existence is 'constituted' by the relation of persons with 'you and I' replacing the solitary 'I' (MacMurray 1957, 13,16). My hiding behind the academic authorities was actually an act of distance, of non-relationality. It was a distancing myself from a 'direct' encounter with the hearer, the reader, the responder. Kegan and Lahey's (2010, 774-778) three developmental stages of critical thinking mesh with Covey's description of personal development. Both end with a relational construct. The self-transformative stage of critical thinking is a recognition that there are other views and other people that must be part of my universe. The third stage of Covey's personal development moving from dependence to interdependence is 'interdependence' (Covey 1989, 53). While I had faced my experience I was fearful of entering into a level of relationality that would actually assist me in being an empowered and an empowering person.

My conceptual journey followed my personal journey. I started by looking for techniques and principles and as my case studies unfolded I ended up discovering the relational cycle of an organisation with a reflexive temperament, relational maturity, incarnational leadership, and identity hospitality. It seemed that in each case participants already possessed the tacit knowledge that what drove empowerment was not technique. Participants did not see leader failure as particularly disturbing, nor a heavy dose of leader decision-making. Structure was not a focus. Again and again the benevolent integrity of the leader, who walked the talk and had a healthy ego mattered most of all. Why? Because participants knew that those relational features were what sustained empowerment. Just as constantly the oft repeated refrain of the significance of those the participants worked with came through loudly. One worker came in early each day in

part because of the people around him or her. Another knew that his or her personal advancement was because a leader believed in the participant. Just as dependably no one could stay in an organisation where they were robbed of voice. This was less about sharing opinions that about being present to others.

What have I learned?

I learned that leaders and organisations get to choose. While it cannot be proven that the organisation will be more productive or profitable, the research shows that it cannot be shown that an empowering environment will have a detrimental impact on such concerns either. When a CEO invites not only top management but rank and file in to critique a new but poorly functioning compensation plan, this act alone communicated how the CEO trusted the employees.

I learned that people are stunningly resilient. Despite horrific stories of disempowering organisational experiences these employees were willing to trust again and try again. The turn around time did not seem that great. I am not suggesting that every layer of impact has been tended to, but enough so that employees could enjoy and contribute in a healthy way. History does not need to be a prison. When an employee suffered the death of a spouse that employee found his or her way back. An employee who endured continual abuse from a supervisor to the point of taking legal action found another place of employment and is a trusted and trusting employee. It is true that when there is an absence of trust many people live in a constant state of emergency prepared to flee or fight (Kohn 2008, 79). That was my story. But it appears that an employee is quickly willing to take another chance if given adequate cause.

I learned that in an empowering environment conflict was not given status. It was dealt with and then moved off the table so everyone could get back to more important things.

I learned that this empowerment effort does not have to be perfectly executed. People are flexible in their ability to withhold judgment and continue to contribute in the face of organisational and human failure. Forgiving is a healthy part of empowering environments.

How has this research journey affected my own ministry?

Despite my autoethnographic descriptions of disempowering church experiences I am still in the church. In that realm this research journey has impressed two behavioural features on me. First is to live a visible life. This choice alone is relational. Participants liked it when a leader was accessible, ‘in the trenches’ with them, made his or her thinking visible. I know that there are times when solitude is essential to health, but I must make sure my solitude is not a coping mechanism. Visibility communicates trust and value. I have often sat in meetings until everyone else has shared before calibrating my response rather than trust others early on with what I am thinking. When a CEO took his or her team out one by one and asked them to dream and he or she wrote down those dreams that is visibility. The second is integrity. The church is a world of words and it is easy to get lost in the words and neglect the behaviour. I heard and felt from the participants that ‘walking the talk’ was more than a concern for typical integrity, it was a sign that here was a safe place where they could breath and become visible.

What should others in my position learn from this research either personally or organisationally?

I believe the most important thing someone else should learn is that in an empowering organisation there is little gap between a person's personal journey and professional journey. The leader must come as a whole person. The participants highlighted not only the 'walking the talk' but the healthy ego, being aware of the 'dark side' and the tendency to fear and control. They know what holds a leader back. Does the leader know? Employees in every case took joy in knowing aspects of their personal lives, not out of voyeurism but relational interest in the whole person. It did not mean there was a requirement of exposure only the awareness that the whole life mattered.

How can this material be used to fulfill the vision that has been expressed in this research?

In the last ten years of my life there have been three people who communicated with me a truth that changed my life. The first was Peter Holmes who asked me in a coffee shop, 'What do you want?' This invitation to explore without guilt the desires that sat hidden was something entirely new to me. When I returned from England with the intention of going into business consulting I interviewed a number of businessmen and women. When I told Jeff Biecker what I wanted to do he started a sentence. He said, 'When people find out you are new at this.' In my mind I finished the sentence this way, 'They will not think you have anything to offer.' But let me give the entire sentence with the way he finished it, 'When people find out you are new at this, they will want to help you.' It was a new way of seeing people. The third is my academic supervisor, Martin Stringer, who saw me hiding behind other authorities and said, 'Have the confidence of your opinions.'

Each of these people had one thing in common. They were permission givers. We often characterise giving permission as something that is withheld or given grudgingly. But I mean by permission something that is anticipatory, inviting, welcoming or endorsing. I learned from the cases that people carry a yearning in their heart and unless severely damaged the individual desires to grow, belong, and contribute. Empowerment is about giving permission. One participant in the cases was downhearted. The participant had previous experience at a high level of management and knew that he or she could help their present organisation in a number of ways and was having a hard time finding an opening. It was not about status or money. It was about contributing. The participant was asking for permission.

Behind this consideration of permission is the question of to whom do we give privileged voice in our lives. Who is allowed to speak with authority and in what domains. I gave people privileged voice in arenas or at stages of my life that they should not have had.

Most of the leaders and organisations of my earlier years withheld permission. Giving permission is not transferring power. It is allowing a person to use the personal capacity and energy they already possess. It is inviting the person to be fully present. It is opening the curtain so they can sing.

APPENDIX ONE

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

1. Short, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to all respondents to establish where they saw their organisation relative to an empowering work environment based on the Spreitzer categories.
2. A six part survey, with a combination of 5-point Likert scale questions and an invitation to make further comment on two questions in each section of the respondent's choice.
3. Individual interviews followed with the questions around a cluster of topics related to the research hypothesis. Feedback opportunities were verbalized at the end of the interview as well as an avenue for further contact.
4. Focus groups involved people invited from the production and support level. No supervisors were present due to the potential of them stifling discussion. Also, to facilitate response, since there was not data to support the level of trust among colleagues, questions were asked from a positive perspective. The focus group questions clustered around three themes that surfaced in the interviews. In early discussions with leaders, on issues related to the empowerment issue, it became apparent that many organizations that are empowering have not employed a particular program and are not sure how they have done it. So the purpose of the focus groups was to incite tacit knowledge.
5. Interviews with the CEO or equivalent. The interview schedule was designed based on special knowledge of the leader, typical role responsibilities and an analysis of the previous interviews and focus groups.

APPENDIX TWO
CONSENT FORM

UNDERSTANDING EMPOWERMENT:

A Project Undertaken as part of a
PhD programme at the University of Birmingham, UK

By Derry Long, derryslong@gmail.com

SUBJECT CONSENT FORM

FOR

PARTICIPATION IN HUMAN RESEARCH AT

(INSERTED NAME OF INSTITUTION)

This research title is: ‘Empowerment: A Search for Social Structures that assist in
Creating and Sustaining Empowering Organizational Culture. A Qualitative Study.’

You are being asked to participate in a study of how social structures assist or inhibit
empowerment within a work environment.

The purpose of this study, which is part of a PhD research project, is to discover and
describe the social structures that assist some organizations in creating and sustaining
empowering organizational cultures. The research is focused on organizations that aspire
to be empowering places for all their employees and have some evidence that such
aspiration is being realized.

If you agree to participate data will be primarily collected with four tools, namely, a two page questionnaire to all participants which can be completed in about 15 minutes, a 6-8 page questionnaire which can be completed in approximately an hour, selected individual interviews with some of the participants lasting one hour, and a focus group of an hour and a half. After the four tools have been administered you will be invited to a feedback session. This process would occur over a four-month period. Individuals asked to participate would be all the full-time support staff, faculty, and administration of (name of organisation).

Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and your identity as a participant will be known only to the researcher and in the case of the focus group(s), those who are participating. Collected data will be held in a secure way. As well, in the final documents the name of the institution will remain anonymous. Further, an ethics committee formed from two universities is reviewing my process.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study. The possible benefits to you, personally, associated with this study might include an increased personal understanding of empowerment as it relates to you and your work place. It may assist those in your organization in their efforts to create and sustain an empowering organizational culture at every level.

You are welcome to ask questions either before or during the research process. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time. A copy of this consent form will be sent to you for your files. If you chose to participate please sign (on the back) and return in the envelope provided.

AUTHORIZATION: I have read the above and understand the nature and scope of this study. I _____, agree to participate in this research. I understand that I may later refuse to participate and that I may withdraw from this study at any time. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signed: _____ Date _____

Researcher: _____ Date _____

APPENDIX THREE

CONFIRMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Please read each one in reference to your employment position at (name of organization) and check the answer that most closely reflects your perception.

I have the support I need from my peers to do my job well.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I have the support I need from my immediate supervisor to do my job well.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I feel I am welcome to participate in decisions related to my work.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I feel I have flexibility in carrying out my responsibilities.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I feel concerns I may have about my job are given consideration.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I feel I am valued as a member of the team.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I feel that lines of authority are precisely defined.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I have a clear understanding of the goals for the department in which I work.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I understand the strategies of the organization.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I understand top management's vision for the organization.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I have access to the information I need to do my job well.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I feel that my primary work responsibilities are a match with my personal values.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

I like doing the things my primary work responsibilities require of me.

Always Usually Occasionally Seldom Never

APPENDIX FOUR
ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS QUESTIONNAIRE
PERSONAL INFORMATION

Year of Birth:

Gender: M/F

Time employed at this organization in years and months (example; 6 years, 5 months):

Check the level that reflects your highest level of education completed:

High School/GED

Some Undergraduate Study

Undergraduate Degree

Some Graduate Study

Presently Active in Graduate Program

Graduate Degree

Post Graduate Work

Your job category at your organization: For the purpose of this study, there are three categories of jobs, namely, support staff, production, and leadership/management. For example, in an educational institution, a secretary would be support staff, a teacher would be production, and a principal would be leader/management or in a car dealership the receptionist would be support staff, the car salesman would be production, and the sales manager would be leadership/management. Please check the job category that most closely matches your role in the organization. Use the space below if you feel your response needs explanation.

Support staff

Production

Leadership/Management

How many people do you supervise? (If you are not a supervisor, please enter a zero)

Have you experienced any promotions while employed at the organization?

(Options for all questions were: Always, Usually, Occasionally, Seldom, Never)

SECTION ONE (please check the answer that most reflects your perception)

1.1 I have confidence in the competency of the leaders of this organization.

1.2 The leadership of this organization appears responsive to input from others within the organization.

1.3 Inflexibility is a leadership response in this organization.

1.4 The leaders of this organization appear to use power wisely.

1.5 I have a clear understanding of the vision of this organization.

(Please choose any two of the statements from this section and use the space below to explain or illustrate your answers. Put the number of the statement upon which you are expanding in the box to the left of your answer.)

SECTION TWO (please check the answer that most reflects your perception)

2.1 Appropriate technology is provided for me to do my job well.

2.2 Training is an obvious priority in this organization.

2.3 There are tangible ways others communicate appreciation for my efforts at work.

2.4 Performance expectations are communicated clearly to me.

2.5 I am rewarded appropriately for my work performance.

(Please choose any two of the statements from this section and use the space below to explain or illustrate your answers. Put the number of the statement upon which you are expanding in the box to the left of your answer.)

SECTION THREE (please check the answer that most reflects your perception)

3.1 The understood lines of communication in my department are respected.

3.2 Change that affects me is communicated well.

3.3 I have an adequate understanding of the goals of my department.

3.4 I experience a satisfactory level of communication with my immediate supervisor.

3.5 Communication in my department occurs in a non-threatening style.

(Please choose any two of the statements from this section and use the space below to explain or illustrate your answers. Put the number of the statement upon which you are expanding in the box to the left of your answer.)

SECTION FOUR (please check the answer that most reflects your perception)

4.1 Decisions are made with appropriate involvement of those affected.

4.2 The values of the organization are reflected in the decisions that are made in my department.

4.3 The implementation of a decision is done so in an organized way.

4.4 Decisions are made in accordance with the formal structure of the organization.

4.5 I feel welcome to share my ideas about improvement in the organization with co-workers in the organization.

(Please choose any two of the statements from this section and use the space below to explain or illustrate your answers. Put the number of the statement upon which you are expanding in the box to the left of your answer.)

SECTION FIVE (please check the answer that most reflects your perception)

5.1 In this organization, co-workers would not be allowed to mistreat me.

5.2 When there is miscommunication there is an effort to resolve it without blame.

5.3 There is an informal group that exerts unhealthy pressure on me.

5.4 I am not afraid of how those in authority in this organization resolve conflict.

5.5 During times of stress in the organization, my experience is that conflict is handled fairly.

(Please choose any two of the statements from this section and use the space below to explain or illustrate your answers. Put the number of the statement upon which you are expanding in the box to the left of your answer.)

SECTION SIX (please check the answer that most reflects your perception)

6.1 I feel I am a trusted member of my organization.

6.2 Solving problems as a group is a common approach that I am involved in.

6.3 Intimidation is a relational style used in my work arena.

6.4 I am eager to go to work.

6.5 I feel a valued part of my organization.

(Please choose any two of the statements from this section and use the space below to explain or illustrate your answers. Put the number of the statement upon which you are expanding in the box to the left of your answer.)

APPENDIX FIVE

CASE STUDY PARTICIPATION

Participation was as follows:

1. Case Two. 6 of 13 employees

6 of 6 responded to survey 1

6 of 6 responded to survey 2

6 of 6 responded to interview

4 of 4 invited responded to focus group

1 of 1 CEO responded to interview

2. Case One. 11 of 22 employees

11 of 11 responded to survey 1

11 of 11 responded to survey 2

10 of 11 responded to interview

5 of 5 invited responded to focus group

1 of 1 CEO responded to interview

3. Case Three. 11 of 22 employees

11 of 11 responded to survey 1

11 of 11 responded to survey 2

8 of 11 responded to interview

5 of 5 invited responded to focus group

1 of 1 CEO responded to interview

APPENDIX SIX

DATA CODING

Level one.

Conceptual Grid

EM Empowerment Characteristics

- CP Competency. Quality execution as perceived by actor/organisation
- CH Choice. Decisions within role and responsibility
- ME Meaning. Intrinsic to identity of actor
- IM Impact. Extrinsic on organisation and noticed by people important to actor

HY Hypotheses

- TP Traits and Processes. Organisation dispositions and behaviours
- LE Leadership. Traits or processes which seem tied to empowerment activities and environment
- PR Pre-conditions. Traits or processes that seem to stand outside of or prior to empowerment processes
- BE Benefits. Soft or hard to the organization or actor as perceived by the actor
- CC Congregational Comparisons. Items standing out for further focus related to congregations

OM Organizational Management

- GR Groups. Committees, formal and informal groups, ad hoc, etc.
- DE Decision-making. At every level
- LD Leadership. Typical roles and activities
- CO Communication. How organization talks to itself and to others.

-CN Conflict. How it is seen, not seen, handled, impacted

-MO Motivation. Systemic and non-formal ways and attitudes of people towards organization as it relates to their work performance.

Experiential Grid

PR Personal Response

-FE Feeling. Emotion

-BE Belief. Conviction, perceived fact

-EX Experience. Personal history

-AT Attitude. Disposition in general or specific to a time, place, or person.

DI Discourse

-CS Consequences. Examples, 'as a result of,' or 'because of'

-CN Conditions. Examples, 'because' or 'since'

-RP Repetitiveness. Continuous use of words or synonyms for actions or attitudes of people or organization

-MT Metaphor

EN Environment

-RE Relationship of Actors. Interaction of people at multiple levels

-ST Strategies and Tactics. How people accomplish their tasks, goals, navigate the organizational setting.

-PS Perspectives. Ideas actor has that are held up to evaluate people or organization like, 'communication is everything.'

-PC Perception. How actor sees reality such as, 'we change slowly'

-SE Settings. Relational and physical places and how they are perceived.

Researcher's Grid

UN Unusual

- SU Surprises. What researcher did not expect to see or had not thought of
- QU Queries. What does this mean in this context?

CM Confirmation

- PV Positive. Appears to affirm part of hypotheses
- NG Negative. Appears to contest part of hypotheses
- NE Neutral. Appears to have no impact on hypotheses
- NU Numbers. Frequency, absence

Level two. The following list is meant as illustrative rather than complete. In style the code would be attached to a broader or small code structure to give it place and connectedness.

- CA Causal
- CF Configuration
- CN Concept
- CT Category
- EX Explanation
- FR Frame
- LK Link
- LM Local Meaning
- NO Norms
- OT Organization Type
- PL Plausibility

-PT Patterns

-RL Relationship

-RU Rules

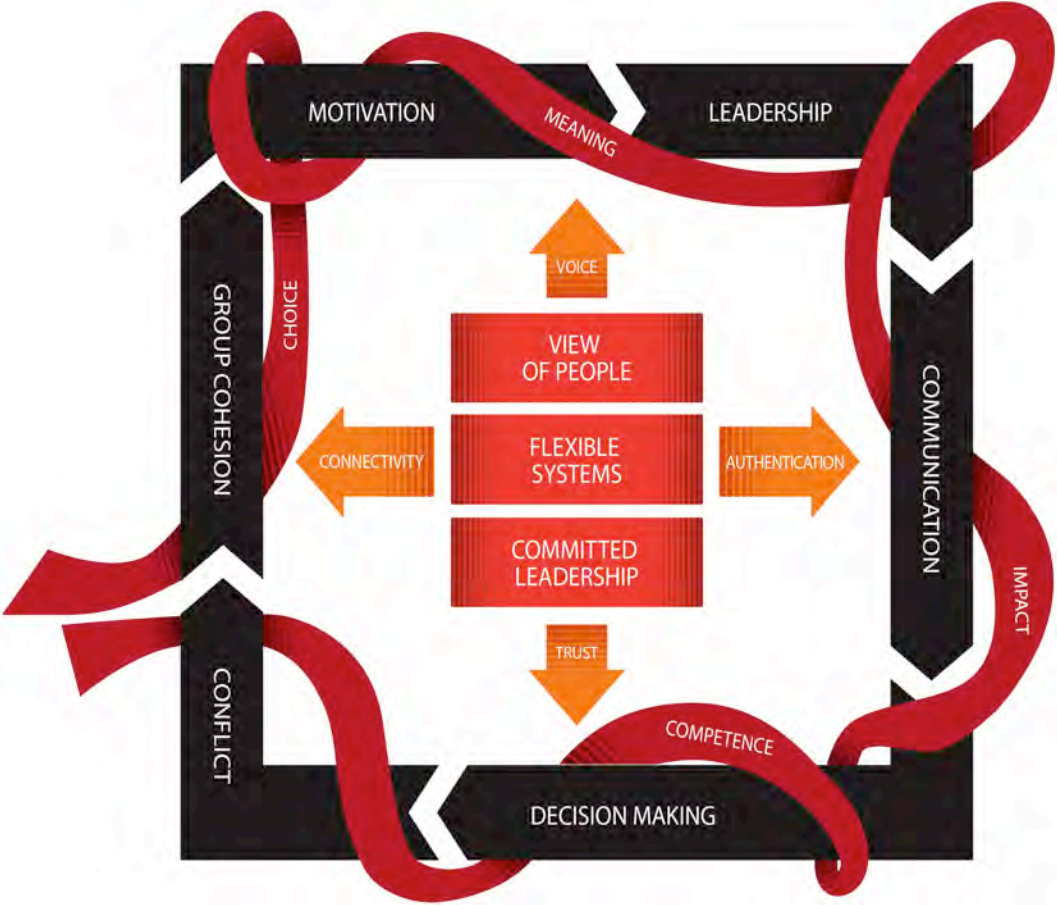
-SQ Sequence

-TH Theme

-VA Variable

Level three. The actual codes for this level will be emerging from the level one, parts one and two coding.

APPENDIX SEVEN
EMPOWERMENT DIAGRAM



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