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THE MEANING, CONSTRUCTION, AND PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

THE MEANING, CONSTRUCTION, AND PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

By

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This was an exploratory study on the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership at South African higher education institutions. Three main questions were central to this investigation:

1. What does leadership mean to selected leaders of post-apartheid South African higher education institutions?

2. What influences the post-apartheid South African higher education leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership?

3. How have these understandings affected the leaders' practice of leadership?

The constructivist grounded theory provided a theoretical framework for this research. Semi-structured interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were conducted with 39 higher education leaders across several universities and technikons (post-secondary institutions dedicated to technical education) in South Africa. Follow-up interviews were conducted, as needed, to seek clarification of the meanings and contradictions in the data. Data collected were subjected to interpretations informed by the constructivist grounded theory. Data were analyzed simultaneously with the data-collection process (Merriam, 1998). Cross-case analysis (Denzin, 2000) was used to look for themes that cut across cases and for institutional differences.

Findings on the meaning of leadership suggest that leadership entails leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision. Leaders' construction of meaning about leadership was influenced by race, gender, training, religion, politics, and family. The practice of leadership was a product of the leaders' value system shaped by the institutional cultures and the challenges faced by higher education leaders in South Africa.

To my wife, Nomahlubi, my children, family, and friends.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Leadership is the most elusive phenomenon found in organizational science, and it remains the most studied and least understood construct (Bennis, 1986). Cronin (1993) argued that research on leadership has indicated that there are as many views of what leadership means as there are people who are writing about it. The present study grew out of my interest in understanding the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership in South African institutions of higher education. In this study, I explored how senior higher education leaders in post-apartheid South Africa constructed the meaning of leadership by letting them define their leadership philosophy, how they came to construct such a philosophy or view of leadership, and how their views about leadership were translated into practice.

Leadership in South African higher education institutions operates in a context of transformation imperatives (Figaji, 1997). My belief was that the post-apartheid transformation context has made special demands on the leaders at South African higher education institutions. These demands have required them to challenge their existing norms and values in order to create a new conception of leadership appropriate for the post-apartheid higher education context.

In post-apartheid South Africa, higher education leaders function in a context that has numerous challenges as well as reconstructed roles and responsibilities. These challenges involve nurturing the political, economic, and social growth of a young democracy like South Africa.

In 1994, the first democratic elections heralded South Africa's movement away from inequality and authoritarianism toward democracy and liberty (Study Abroad Website on South African Universities and Technikons, 2001). Today, South African higher education institutions operate in a society of great historical, cultural, and ethnic diversity. There are 21 universities and 15 technikons (postsecondary institutions dedicated to technical education), stratified according to whom they historically have served. The current government is rationalizing these 36 higher education institutions into 21 mega higher education providers.

These changes are happening in the context of the history of South African higher education as primarily one of segregation and unequal distribution of resources based on racial classification (Mabokela & King, 2001). Historically, the white minority populations of South Africa enjoyed well-resourced education, whereas the black majority citizens were afforded an under-resourced schooling and limited access to higher education. This is the context that continues to define post-apartheid South African higher education institutions and affects the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership at these institutions.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

In the last decade or so, South African higher education institutions have embarked on a transformation process that has been characterized by conflict and instability, and marked by an increase in protests by students and staff at these institutions. This conflict and instability have come at a time when higher education institutions are charged with the responsibilities of providing leadership in the process of translating the political gains that have been achieved into tangible economic and social benefits, especially to disadvantaged communities.

In this study I sought to understand, describe, and explain how leaders at post-apartheid higher education institutions in South Africa constructed the meaning of leadership in their context. In so doing, I examined the challenge of constructing the meaning of leadership against a history of racial segregation and transformation imperatives. I acknowledge that the leaders themselves were faced with the call of constructing a new meaning of leadership that was consistent with their changing environment, especially in dealing with changing demographics on campuses, new policy priorities, financial challenges, emerging leadership styles, and the process of change or transformation in higher education.

Figaji (1997) painted a picture of this challenging environment for higher education leaders. He wrote,

> Unfortunately, many leaders are...faced with demands of participation on national bodies related to higher education—dealing with the energy-sapping issues of student protests, trying to adapt to and understand the fast-changing external environment. At the same time, [they are] also dealing with the changing attitudes and demands of the internal constituencies who are fired up by their new rights and the general clamor for participation, democracy and transparency. (pp. 286-287)

Research Questions

This study was undertaken to explore the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership in South African higher education institutions. The following three main questions were posed to guide the collection of data for this study:

1. What does leadership mean to selected leaders of post-apartheid South African higher education institutions?

2. What influences the post-apartheid South African higher education leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership?

3. How have these understandings affected the leaders' practice of leadership?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in three ways:

1. The findings help in understanding the processes through which leaders in the South African higher education sector understand and practice leadership.

2. The study contributes to the development of theory on emerging meanings of leadership at South African higher education institutions in a context of transformation.

3. The study provided a platform for leaders to define leadership in their own terms.

There is a dearth of literature on the meaning of leadership in South African higher education institutions. This study was focused on what leadership means in a context of change. It was intended to go beyond the case studies developed by Austin (2001), Ndebele (1997), White (1997), and Figaji (1997), which only acknowledged the need for new styles of leadership. Although these researchers also acknowledged the complexities presented by the South African higher education environment, they did not investigate the meaning of leadership in such a context. In this study, I went beyond acknowledging the context by also examining how leaders of higher education institutions described what leadership meant to them.

The findings from this study clarified the processes through which leaders in South African higher education institutions understand and practice leadership. In gathering the data, I listened to these senior leaders' stories with openness to their feelings and experience. Further, I avoided the traditional frames in studying leadership, in terms of looking at behaviors, traits, and effectiveness or other objectively measurable outcomes. I did not look for universal truths, but rather focused on the senior leaders' experiences from their own viewpoints.

In conducting the study, I used the constructivist grounded theory approach, in which data are collected from a natural environment (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Thus, the construct of leadership in the post-apartheid higher education context was investigated, as described by the study participants (leaders). Data collection resulted in a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of leadership in higher education from the perspectives of these senior leaders themselves.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they were used in this study:

Afrikaners: People of Dutch and French descent who settled in South Africa. As a group, they were responsible for a socially engineered system of racial discrimination known as apartheid, an Afrikaans word meaning separateness.

Black people: A collective term denoting people who were considered nonwhites under apartheid rule (1948 to 1994). This includes people of African descent, Indians, and Coloreds of South Africa.

Higher education institutions: Postsecondary institutions such as universities, technikons, and colleges of education (teacher education and colleges). These institutions are administered at the national level by the ministry of education. For the purpose of this study, higher education institutions referred only to universities and technikons.

Technikon: A tertiary-level institution providing vocational education in order to support the labor market with people possessing particular skills, adequate technological and practical knowledge, and the necessary personal qualities to play a leading role in the working community. These institutions offer university-comparable standards in

teaching, research, and examinations. Since 1995, technikons have been allowed to offer bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees. The Afrikaans word *techne,* meaning ingenuity, dexterity, or skill, is combined with the Afrikaans suffix *kon* to create the noun *technikon* (Reynolds, 2001).

Overview of the Dissertation

The second chapter offers a comprehensive review of literature on leadership. Chapter 3 outlines the design, methods of data collection and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents data on the meaning of leadership. Chapter 5 discusses data on construction of leadership. Chapter 6 offers a detailed account on how leaders' understandings affect the leaders' practice of leadership. Chapter 7 provides a summary, discussion, and implications of the findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Multidisciplinary literature was chosen to provide the background for this study concerning what leadership means in the post-apartheid higher education context. This literature helped in elucidating the process through which meaning is constructed, and the translation of that meaning into leaders' day-to-day practice. Literature reviewed for this study was focused on the following topics:

1. The South African educational context
2. Transformation in the context of post-apartheid policy
3. The study of leadership as an organizational construct
4. Leadership cognition and meaning-making
5. The constructivist view of leadership

Education in South Africa

For the purpose of this study, I explored the general background of education in South Africa, starting with the inception of higher education in South Africa and how apartheid policies created a differentiated system of education. The policies of the late 1980s necessitated the transformation process that was my motivation for focusing on leadership in a transforming context.

Background

The complexities of leadership in higher education in South Africa cannot be understood without reviewing the history that has shaped higher education. The

documented history of education is South Africa is intricate, full of myths and misrepresentations, division and conflict. However, it provides an important point of reference for one's understanding and interpretation of the present and the future (Hartshorne, 1992).

The history of higher education can be traced back to 1829, marking the establishment of the University of Cape Town, originally for English speakers. The University of Stellenbosch was established 45 years later, in 1874, originally for Afrikaans speakers. The University of Fort Hare, originally for speakers of indigenous languages of South Africa, and the University of South Africa, a distance education campus historically for Blacks, Coloreds, and Indians, were established by the University Act of 1916 (Mabokela, 1997).

South Africa saw a rapid growth in higher education with the establishment of a number of race- and ethnic-based institutions. Institutions for ama-Xhosa, ama-Zulus, Indians, coloreds, Basotho, Bapedi, Batswana, ama-Shangaan, and ama-Venda were established between 1960 and the 1980s. Today, there are 21 universities and 15 technikons (postsecondary institutions dedicated to technical education) in South Africa. The current government is merging these 36 higher education institutions to about 21 mega providers of higher education in South Africa.

The election of the Afrikaner government in 1948 is often considered the beginning of apartheid, a system that legalized racial discrimination in South Africa between 1948 and 1994. Apartheid instituted a legalized segregated system of education, as well. Under apartheid, higher education institutions in South Africa were expected to admit students based on ethnic and racial classification. Laws such as the Bantu-Education Act of 1953 and the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 are

examples of the restrictive laws ratified by the government. Separate universities were established for Africans/blacks, coloreds, Indians/Asians, and whites. The apartheid government of South Africa's universities and technikons were socially constructed along ethnic and linguistic lines (Mabokela & King, 2001).

The allocation of resources at higher education institutions in the country mirrored the racial hierarchy entrenched in other sectors of South African society. Higher education institutions for whites related to the core life of the economy, whereas black higher education institutions were socially engineered to exist at the periphery of the country's social and economic life (Godden, 1992).

Inequality in all facets of South African life was perpetuated for nearly five decades (1948 to 1994). The state-sponsored policies on racial discrimination persisted despite domestic and international opposition. The civil revolts of 1961, 1968, 1976, and 1985 by black communities marked the intensification of the struggle against white supremacy in South Africa.

In the 1976 uprisings, the world witnessed the entrance of school-age children into active politics (Ndebele, 1997). These revolts contributed to making the state ungovernable and also reduced the capacity of social institutions, such as family, schools, churches, and administrative systems, to have an organized stabilizing effect on an increasingly unstable social environment (Ndebele, 1997).

Students viewed the managers of higher education institutions as direct agents of the apartheid state. Protracted conflicts between students and management became a prevalent feature of institutional life in South African higher education institutions (Ndebele, 1997). At that time, both black and white higher education institutions became battlegrounds between those bent on imposing apartheid policies and those determined to

see its destruction (White, 1997). Most higher education institutions had no vision or mission statement, thus placing leadership and political control in the hands of individual academics who, in many cases, promoted their own curricula and hidden agendas (White, 1997).

Starting in the early 1980s, South Africa witnessed a decisive student influence at higher education institutions. This influence became a marked characteristic of academic life (Ndebele, 1997). As part of the large social strategy to cripple the apartheid government and its agencies, students rendered the institutions ungovernable. On the political front, the release of political prisoners in the early 1990s by the National Party government marked a departure from apartheid policies toward the creation of a milieu for negotiating a peaceful change.

The literature reviewed on education under apartheid clearly indicated that the history of South African higher education was primarily one of segregation and unequal distribution of resources based on racial classification (Mabokela, 2001). The historical imbalance in the provision of education to South African people left the country with a racially divided higher education system and in search of an identity. Many South Africans still believe that, on 27 April 1994, apartheid was crushed, thus presenting an opportunity to correct the historical imbalances that apartheid created. However, many did not fully realize that the country would remain racially divided and be struggling to define leadership in the post-apartheid context.

Policy Initiatives

The changing circumstances in South African education can be traced back to pre-1994 initiatives. In the early 1990s, educators, academic unions, student organizations, and liberation movements, through dialogues and debates about the ills of the education

system, agreed on the need to transform that system. These debates were summed up in the following major reports on education policy (Figaji, 1997):

1. The education renewal strategy (National Department of Education, 1992), outlining the apartheid government's proposals for change in education.

2. The *Framework Report* (National Education Policy Investigation, 1993), offering an alternative policy proposal for a transformed system of education.

3. The *National Education and Strategy* initiatives (National Education and Board, 1994), mapping a new education and policy for South Africa.

4. The *Policy Framework for Education* (African National Congress, 1995), offering the African National Congress's (the current party in government) proposal for post-apartheid education.

Through the work of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), issues pertaining to racism, sexism, and democracy were discussed. The NCHE recommended a system of education based on principles of access, equity, democracy, quality, accountability, and redress. Passage of the Higher Education Act of 1997 provided a framework for the establishment of a single coordinated higher education system with governance and funding structures under the control of the single National Education Department (Reynolds, 2001). Green papers (discussion papers on policy) and white papers (government policy documents) complemented the policy-formulation process (Daniels, 2001). The most notable policy documents that were products of this process of transformation of higher education are the *Transformation of Higher Education Policy, The Size and Shape of Higher Education,* and the Higher Education Act (101) of 1997.

All of these initiatives addressed the ills of apartheid by formulating policies and a framework for transformation, but they did not develop a framework for leadership in the post-apartheid context. Although the government passed the *White Paper on the Program for Transformation of Higher Education Act* (1997), which offered guidelines for shared governance, these policy documents presented no indication of what leadership means in the post-apartheid South African higher education context.

The policy initiatives introduced principles of access, equity, democracy, and nondiscrimination that were infused in the planning of post-apartheid education. Documents such as the *White Paper on the Program for the Transformation of Higher Education* (1997) and the report of the National Commission for Higher Education (1996) presented a legislative frame for transformation of apartheid education. However, the kinds of leaders required to implement the suggested changes were not discussed in these documents.

Transformation at Higher Education Institutions

Another body of literature reviewed for this study focused on the transformation process at South African higher education institutions. Case studies on transformation of higher education by Austin (2001), Cloete and Mohamed (1995), Mabokela (1997), and White (1997) presented a comprehensive picture of the work that lies ahead in this process of change. Austin looked at the collaborative route in the transformation process at the University of Port Elizabeth. She pointed out that the transformation context in South African universities benefits from a collaborative leadership style that exhibits values such as "openness, vision and principles." Cloete and Mohamed reviewed the role played by transformation forums in fostering democratic practices and shared governance

at nine university campuses in South Africa. They found that the transformation forums or committees facilitated democratic practices and shared governance.

Mabokela (1997) examined the integration of black students on white campuses. She argued that language as a medium of instruction was used to derail the transformation at the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University in South Africa. White (1997) studied the transformation of the University of the North from an institution established out of political necessity into one that can pride itself on innovative educational programs for people's empowerment.

Although there is literature to suggest that South Africans are committed to transforming higher education (Cloete & Mohamed, 1995), little research has been conducted about leadership at higher education institutions there. Austin (2001), Cloete and Mohamed (1995), White (1997), and Ndebele (1997) described the complexity of leading higher education institutions in South Africa, but their works do not indicate how leaders construct their understanding of leadership in a transforming context. The scope and focus of these studies were limited because most of them looked at universities solely as organizations and said little about the implications of transformation when it comes to leadership. In this study, I attempted to fill the gaps that exist in the literature on South African leadership by looking at how leaders construct meaning in a context that is governed by changing national and institutional priorities.

The Study of Leadership as an Organizational Construct

This section contains a review of literature on the study of leadership as an organizational construct, exploring main ideas and flaws of the great man approach, trait theory, behavioral approaches, and communities-of-leaders views. This review also presents the constructivist view of leadership as a viable way to study leadership,

especially in the South African context. Leadership is one of the most elusive and complex phenomena found in organizational science and remains "the most studied and the least understood construct" (Bennis, 1986, p. 199).

Because of the complexity and disagreements that occur at the theoretical level concerning the conceptualization of leadership, there is lack of consensus on the operational definition of leadership (Lipham, 1973). In this study I did not attempt to define leadership, but rather asked leaders themselves to define leadership based on their own context. The following discussion highlights the evolution of the literature on leadership.

Traditional Views of Leadership

Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) said that research on leadership can be grouped into six major categories: trait theories, power and influence theories, behavioral theories, contingency theories, cultural theories, and symbolic theories. Mainstream leadership literature has focused on studies examining leadership according to the great man, trait, situational, behavioral, and communities-of-leaders approaches. Theories of leadership reflect the social, political, and economic forces at work in the larger society. They also build on each other so that, as new ways of examining leadership are formulated, our knowledge is enriched by what has come before (Lambert, 1995).

The traditional view of leadership found in the writings of Taylor (1911), Gulick (1948), and Urwick and Gulick (1937) tended to describe leaders as people who maintain tradition and direct others. According to this view, followers have little authority over decision-making processes related to goals and programming of activities. From this perspective, leadership is described as autocratic in nature and largely influenced by

scientific management theories, which emphasize efficiency and control. This leadership paradigm is viewed as supporting the great man leadership approach, which suggests that leaders are born, not made.

The great man leadership approach generated the trait theory. The trait theory of leadership operates from a common understanding with the great man approach by recognizing that individual behaviors are determined in part by one's unique personality structure, which contributes to the individual's ability to assume and successfully function in a position of leadership (Bensimon et al., 1989). Edmonds (1979), Burns (1978), Bennis and Nanus (1985), and Deal and Kennedy (1982) portrayed leadership as the ability to perform key instructional duties, such as monitoring, in order to achieve organizational goals. However, the trait theory, like the great man approach, fell short because it did not consider the relationship among the psychological, sociological, cultural, and other dimensions of leadership in specific situational contexts (Lipham, 1973).

Because the trait approach was found to be simplistic and could not withstand close scrutiny, the more complex contingency leadership approach was developed (Perrow, as cited in Watkins, 1989). The contingency leadership approach or the situational approach to leadership emphasized the shift from analysis of personal traits to a study of roles and relationships. The situational leadership approach concentrated on group dynamics more than the individual leader's characteristics. Fiedler and Chemers (1974), Hershey (1984), and Vroom and Yetton (1973) wrote about the contingency approach to leadership. According to these writers, leadership relates to maturity level, work styles of employees, and responsibilities delegated to co-workers in order to achieve organizational goals.

The situational or contingency approach to leadership is viewed as conceptually limited because it fails to provide meaningful explanations of the relations and predictions it proposes (Ashour, 1973). Watkins (1989) explained this, saying:

> The contingency model merely suggests a set of relationships without exploring the basic dimensions of those relationships. Such considerations as the class basis of organizations and the ideological legitimating of organizational hierarchies are conveniently avoided, implying an acceptance of the power status quo. (p. 10)

The contingency approach also presents a static picture of the follower as acted upon by the leader.

The aforementioned shortcomings led to a gradual movement away from the trait or situational approach toward analysis of the behavior of the leader. In the early 1970s, the behavioral approach to leadership gained attention and prestige, although there were many contradictions within this school of thought. The behavioral approach to leadership was explored in the writings of Burns (1978), Halpin and Winer (1957), Barnard (1938), and Simon (1957). These writers viewed the leader's role as being to shape human behavior to match organizational aims. According to this school of thought, leaders are responsible for rewarding followers and sanctioning their behaviors so that everyone contributes to achievement of organizational goals. In this way, the leader plays a transactional role, where there is an exchange between the leader and the followers for the sake of accomplishing organizational aims (Lambert, 1995).

The leader-follower relationship represents a delicate mix of personality and situational variables (Lipham, 1973). The behavioral school of leadership acknowledges that personal and situational variables do not operate singly but function in discernible patterns and in combinations of variables. Lipham argued that either the leader or the followers might misperceive each other's behavior. He further asserted that the degree or extent of misperception is meaningfully and systematically related to various

organizational, group, or individual variables. Proponents understood the behavioral approach as a viable means of analyzing and defining leadership (Lipham, 1974). This approach marked a departure from the old school of leadership, but it still relied considerably on objectively measured outcomes and generated several quantitative studies on leadership.

The communities-of-leaders view, as presented in works by Barth (1988), Bowers and Flinders (1990), Sergiovanni (1989), Gardner (1990), Getzels and Guba (1957), and Vygotsky (1962), is a concept of leadership that is prevalent in the change literature. This type of leadership has its roots in a number of theoretical constructs, including human relations, systems theory and ecological thought. It gained popularity in the late 20th century, having its roots in African and Eastern cultures. This view emphasizes considering people as assets rather than liabilities. It incorporates notions of knowledge capital and perpetual or lifelong learning.

In the literature on communities of leaders, leadership is viewed as a process that is shared among different stakeholders. Senior leaders are viewed as leaders among leaders. They are responsible for facilitating leadership development and growth at various levels of the organization. This context has a flatter and more integrated organizational structure and participants who share common values and purposes (Lambert, 1995). The interactive nature of this leadership style promotes the democratic principles of leadership, consultation, and negotiations and recognizes interdependency between leaders and followers. This approach highlights the important role of followers in aiding or resisting the imposition of the leader's ideas on the group. It emphasizes moral aspects of leadership, recognizing that leaders are there to serve others, as well as to lead at the will of their followers (O'Toole, 1995). This view of leadership is widely

practiced in South African higher education institutions and is reinforced by legislation supporting collaborative governance of institutions.

Leadership Cognition and Meaning-Making

Understanding leadership as a process of meaning-making seems to have come at a time when there is a need to challenge the dominance of behavior, traits, and objectively measured outcomes as the only way of defining leadership (Amey, 1999). This paradigm is viewed as an important source of power in organizations. It rests on a leader's ability to persuade others to enact realities that further the interests the leader wishes to pursue (Morgan, 1997).

Writers on leadership cognition and meaning-making (Bensimon et al., 1989; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Middlehurst, 1993) have concentrated on the role of leaders in creating meaning for others. This interpretive role of leaders involves fostering shared values, culture, and traditions (Green, 1997). It moves away from positivist ways of studying leadership because it looks at how leaders cognitively and subjectively appraise their contexts rather than concentrating on objectively measured outcomes.

In discussing leadership cognition and meaning-making, the studies of Smircich and Morgan (1982), Amey (1992), Amey and Twombly (1993), and Gioia and Thomas (1996) are reviewed, and the ideas of Morgan (1997), Codd (1989), Freire (1970), Foster (1989), and Watkins (1989) are explored. In their seminal work, Smircich and Morgan introduced a focus on how leaders make meaning for others. They highlighted the fact that meaning is context based and that different people may derive divergent meanings from the same event. The writers also said that sense-making and influence emerge as frequently coincidental, interdependent processes that are difficult to distinguish from each other.

Smircich and Morgan's study reaffirmed that leaders create meaning for others in organizations by using symbols and metaphors. This study reinforced behavioral scientists' and cultural theorists' notion that how leaders and followers understand symbols, metaphors, maps, and schemas is central to how organizations experience change and form new identities (Amey, 1999; Bennis, 1994; Clark & Chittipeddi, 1994; Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

Morgan (1997) described meaning-making as "management of meaning" when he examined organizations as political systems. He argued that leadership ultimately involves an ability to define reality for others. Morgan believed that charismatic leaders seem to have a natural ability to shape meaning in this way. He argued that the symbolic management of meaning is important in organizations and can be done using imagery, theater, and gamesmanship. He viewed images, language, symbols, stories, ceremonies, rituals, and other attributes of corporate culture as tools that can be used in the management of meaning.

Another strand of literature on cognition and meaning of leadership focuses on reflective practice, as espoused by Codd (1989). Reflective practice in leadership encompasses the ability of leaders to reflect on their learning, to adapt behavior based on that reflection, and to develop a theoretical frame or a set of understandings that takes into account their experiences (Schon, 1983). Reflective practice of leadership enables leaders to reconstruct the relationship between thought and action. It is a process whereby leaders use self-evaluation or feedback from colleagues or associates. This practice aims to improve or enable the leader to learn more about his or her leadership ability, skills, and knowledge.

Codd also viewed leadership as a form of cultural expression and negotiation, deriving its meaning from the way in which the leader cognitively appraises social situations. He argued that how the leader defines social situations will depend almost entirely on the cultural or ideological viewpoint through which they are perceived.

Codd expanded on the relationship between thought and action, quoting Gramsci's claim that "ordinary people are philosophers in so far as they participate in a particular conception of the world" (p. 164). Gramsci believed that "organic intellectuals" are those who participate fully in the everyday life of a community, while at the same time manifesting political and moral leadership.

This Gramscian notion that organic intellectuals are constructors, organizers, "permanent persuaders," and not just simple orators corresponds with Freire's (1970) argument. Freire asserted that intellectual leadership requires human beings to constitute their own reality theory and cultural action, which may be directed toward liberation. These revolutionary ways of viewing leadership, as presented by Codd, Gramsci, and Freire, make reflective practice an important force in any discussion of leadership cognition and meaning of leadership.

Foster (1989) contributed to the study of leadership by challenging the popular belief that leadership can be studied separately from its context. He argued that leadership cognition is context based and should establish a true narrative for all participants by paying attention to the meanings that have evolved in an organizational context. Foster acknowledged that humans are active beings who are alive, traditional, historical, and entrenched in their environments. This means that human agents are located in a specific history and set of circumstances that to some degree controls their behavior, ways of seeing, and options for acting. This history is their tradition, a tradition

that suggests how one is to live and what one is to value, which often influences how one thinks. Foster believed that people are both victims and beneficiaries of their traditions. On the one hand, tradition closes down many options for living free and independent lives; on the other hand, it provides meaning and sense for our lives.

Amey and Twombly (1993) studied ideologies behind images of leadership. They looked at how ideologies behind leadership have maintained a particular type of leader and have excluded or severely limited access to leadership positions for those who do not fit a specific image. These writers challenged the great man approach and trait theories, arguing that it is important to understand the way leaders create and control discourse and frame reality for others. They asserted that language and the communication of meaning are central to enacting leadership.

In a study on how leaders make meaning for themselves, Amey (1992) drew attention to the importance of how leaders make meaning for the organization. This researcher attempted to determine whether there were differences in the way male and female leaders cognitively construct the concept of leadership and to inductively explore the nature of constructive leadership. Connected-participatory decision-making processes used by leaders were contrasted with hierarchical structures that promote control and centralized decision making. Amey's study added a voice to the challenge of scientific management and objective parliamentarian objectivity. It highlighted the need for leaders to achieve a balance between participative and hierarchical forms of leadership.

Gioia et al. (1994) expanded the understanding of meaning-making as they investigated the uses of sense-making, influence, and symbolism in launching a strategic change. These researchers used an ethnographic interpretative approach in examining the

ways that symbols, metaphors, and various subtle influences were used to lend meaning to concepts and possible courses of action by a task force on strategic change. Gioia et al. made the following observations on the role of symbols in creating meaning:

> Symbols are not only an expressive medium, as most existing portrayals imply, but also a medium for substantive action; symbolism, therefore, not only captures the thought and feeling of organization members, but is action- and outcome-oriented as well. . . . Symbols are the medium for both sense making and influence and these two key processes are inextricably intertwined. . . . Symbolic processes associated with the instigation of change involve evolutionary shifts in directionality primarily internally directed in the early, embryonic stages and externally directed in later, more mature stages. . . . Symbolic processes simultaneously occur at multiple levels of understanding. Symbols were the medium of operation of the change-agent task force, but the task force was a symbol itself. . . . Symbolic no-action can be important to change initiation; not doing something is as important a "symbolic harbinger" as overt action. . . . Strategic change might usefully be cast as a process of re-institutionalization of cognition, actions, and practices. (pp. 238-239)

The study by Gioia et al. revealed not only that symbolism is pervasive in the initiation and acceptance of strategic change, but also that symbols are one of the main means by which leaders accomplish substantive actions. In this connection, symbols were the primary means by which participants in a strategic planning exercise grounded their perceptions and articulated their preferences concerning many aspects of the strategic change.

Summary

In summary, the literature reviewed so far can be categorized into two strands. The first strand is based on a paradigm in which leadership is studied from a positivist perspective. This perspective is dominated by quantitative modes of research. Studies on leadership traits (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Edmonds, 1978), situational leadership (Fiedler & Chemers, 1974; Hershey, 1984; Vroom &

Yetton, 1973), and behavioral approaches to studying leadership (Barnard, 1938; Burns, 1978; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Simon, 1957) subscribed to this paradigm.

This paradigm is limited because it embraces a positivist view of leadership that implies values, ideologies, and interpretation methods that study leadership in formal and rationalistic ways. The literature in this area has been criticized as being static, indifferent toward historical forces, and ignorant of moral and political dimensions of leadership (Amey, 1992; Amey & Twombly, 1993; Green, 1995). Its approach has been limited because it analyzes leadership in terms of influence or authority, thus "legitimizing the power of management or organizational elites" (Watkins, 1989, p. 2). In many cases, this power vested in leadership can be exercised to serve others, but also it can serve to manipulate, mislead, and repress those who do not have the power to influence decisions (Cronin, 1993).

The second strand of literature reviewed for this study was based on a post-positivist perspective that used qualitative modes of research, as evidenced by the works of Barth (1988), Bowers and Flinders (1990), Sergiovanni (1989), Gardner (1990), Smircich and Morgan (1982), Amey (1992), Gioia et al. (1994), Codd (1989), and Lambert (1985). These writers assumed that leadership should exhibit values, ideologies, and interpretation methods that could be derived from a constructivist perspective of leadership. Leadership was viewed as a reciprocal process through which leaders and followers influence each other and maintain a dialectic relationship.

As may be noted, this dynamic approach to leadership recognizes the historical forces and embraces the moral and political dimensions of leadership. It has improved on the traditional approach by challenging the status quo within organizations and advocating for just and empowering modes of leadership.

The second strand of literature offers a sound basis on which future studies may be built; it is not trapped by the limitations of the traditional view of leadership. In these writings, leadership is a practice closely tied to the achievement of organizational goals that are a product of constant negotiations between leaders and their associates. The role of the individual is significant in this literature; humans are seen as constructors of knowledge that is used for the benefit of the organization and individual development. It is the constructive view of leadership that projects leadership as a phenomenon that can be emancipatory and empowering.

The limitations of the available literature on leadership gave credence to this study on the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership by leaders themselves within the social context of post-apartheid South African higher education. The literature reviewed for this study indicated that a lot is known about different variables influencing leadership, such as traits, situations, contingencies, power and influence, and personal and shared leadership. Nevertheless, the amount of leadership research conducted in cultures other than North America and Europe is scant and limited in scope (Cloete & Kulati, 2001; Moja & Kulati, 2002). Thus, the limitations prevalent in the literature on leadership necessitated a study of how leaders construct leadership for themselves, especially in non-Western cultures or settings such as South Africa.

The Constructivist View of Leadership

Constructivism has been a subject of much debate in education; it has been associated with both teaching and learning (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Gruender, 1996; Phillips, 1995; Smith, 1995; Venter, 2001). Studies by Lambert et al. (1995), Gioia et al. (1994), and Amey (1999) constituted modern applications of constructivist approaches to

leadership. In this section, the constructivist view of leadership is defined, and five key ideas about this view of leadership are presented.

According to Schwandt (1997), "constructivism is a philosophical perspective interested in the way in which human beings individually and collectively interpret or construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social and historical contexts" (p. 19). As applied to leadership, constructivism can be understood as a view of leadership based on a theory that encourages individuals to build new conceptions of the meaning of leadership.

This school of thought builds on the constructivist modes of understanding human learning, which can be grouped into two broad "camps." They are:

1. The psychological constructivism espoused by Piaget, Von Glaserfeld, Vygotsky, and Locke, which focuses on cognitive and memory structures or understandings in the mind of the individual learner or knower, and how these are built up.

2. Social constructivism, with proponents such as Solomon and Gergen, which is concerned with public bodies of knowledge and the roles played by social processes within knowledge-producing communities (Philips, as cited in Venter, 2001, p. 88).

The constructivist view of leadership (Lambert et al., 1995) espouses five key ideas:

1. Human lives are inextricably intertwined.

2. Constructivism is the primary basis for learning.

3. Communities that encourage the growth of human potential are based on the principle of ecology.

4. Patterns for relationships form a primary basis for human growth and development.

5. Diversity of relationships forms a primary basis for human growth and development.

According to Lambert et al., the constructivist view of leadership is a reciprocal process that enables participants in an educational community to construct meaning that leads toward a common purpose. This view of leadership offers lenses through which to study leadership from the incumbent's point of view. The constructivist view is concerned with how leaders come to hold their points of view about leadership.

The constructivist approach to studying leadership offers an avenue for leaders to explain and describe how they interpret or construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts (Schwandt, 2000). According to this context, leaders are constructors of meaning; in terms of this study, their conception of what constitutes leadership is a result of the interaction between the leader's mind and the environment.

In this study I built on Schwandt's work. He argued that the constructivist view is an approach used in the social sciences that necessitates a relationship between respondents in which they can tell their stories in their own terms. This approach to understanding leadership encourages researchers to listen to respondents' stories with openness to feeling and experience. According to this view of leadership, reality is socially constructed, and a great number of once-silenced people (students, teachers, and parents) should participate in that construction. The constructivist approach aims at getting at meaning rather than getting at truth as it searches for subjective reality. It is

meaning centered because it emphasizes that meaning is a product of the processes of social negotiation (Nietzche, as cited in Schwandt, 2000).

According to Green (1995), in the foreword to the book by Lambert et al., the constructivist view of leadership focuses not only on many kinds of interactions but also on many kinds of imaginative activities. These activities enable people to reorganize their perceptions of how those with whom they work perceive the common world. Green supported the constructivist leadership view as it builds on "reciprocity," a sense of community in which thoughts are constructed and deconstructed. This view of leadership recognizes that, for some time, leaders have been subjects of debate and that their own voices have been missing in these debates (Lambert et al., 1995). Emanating from the literature reviewed, the constructivist grounded theory was chosen as the framework on which to build this study.

Framework for This Study

The constructivist grounded theory was espoused by Schwandt (2000), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1998), who linked grounded theory and the constructivist approach. The constructivist grounded theory has its roots in sociology and was popularized by Glaser and Strauss and by Strauss and Corbin. This theory fosters the notion that, to understand this world of meaning, each person must interpret it. The constructivist grounded theory makes the following assumptions that are relevant to this study:

1. Human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as they construct or make it.

2. Knowing is not passive (simple imprinting of sensory data on the mind), but active (that is, the mind does something with these impressions), at the very least, forming abstractions or concepts.

3. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience.

4. We need to acknowledge the inevitable historical and socio-cultural dimension of the construction of meaning (Schwandt, 1997).

Schwandt asserted that researchers must elucidate the process of meaning construction, and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and action of social actors. The constructivist grounded theory uses an inductive approach, in which a systematic set of procedures is used to generate theories about social processes. As a result, it often is used to "construct theory where theory is non-existent or where current theory is inadequate" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 44). The constructivist grounded theory was used in this study to enable me to experience data in such a way that they generated insights, hypotheses, and generative questions that I pursued through further data collection.

This framework required that I employ a method of constant comparison, checking the data against the literature from time to time. According to Schwandt (2000), this process enables investigators to sharpen their definitions and to define concepts and their properties. I was forced to examine actions and events as recorded or described in documents and in the words of the respondents.

I chose this theoretical framework for the study because its goal is to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. It offers a unique opportunity to study leadership, emphasizing description of the

phenomenon from the insider's point of view. The constructivist grounded theory is guided by the belief that particular actors, in particular places, at particular times, fashion meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social integration involving history, language, and action (Schwandt, 1997). I recognized that leaders in South African higher education institutions operate in a society of great historical, cultural, and ethnic diversity, which made the chosen theoretical framework most suitable for this study and likewise made it difficult to use other frameworks to study leadership in South African higher education.

In undertaking this study, I was guided by the assertions of Mabokela and King (2001), Figaji (1997), and Moja and Kulati (2002) that the post-apartheid era presents a number of challenges for higher education leaders in South Africa. The socio-historical context in which South African higher education leaders function in is illustrated in Figure 1. The figure captures the social and historical challenges faced by leaders of higher education. It also highlights the fact that leaders at higher education institutions in South Africa are serving racially and ethnically stratified communities, within a context of economic imbalances. The figure also depicts the interactions between leaders and various constituencies that influence the leaders' meaning-making process.

As depicted in the figure, leaders in the post-apartheid higher education context in South Africa are grappling with such leadership challenges as managing governance, serving diverse communities' needs, dealing with global issues in education, and leading the institutions as entrepreneurial entities. Although there have been major developments on the social and political fronts, little is known about what leadership means to higher education leaders in South Africa.

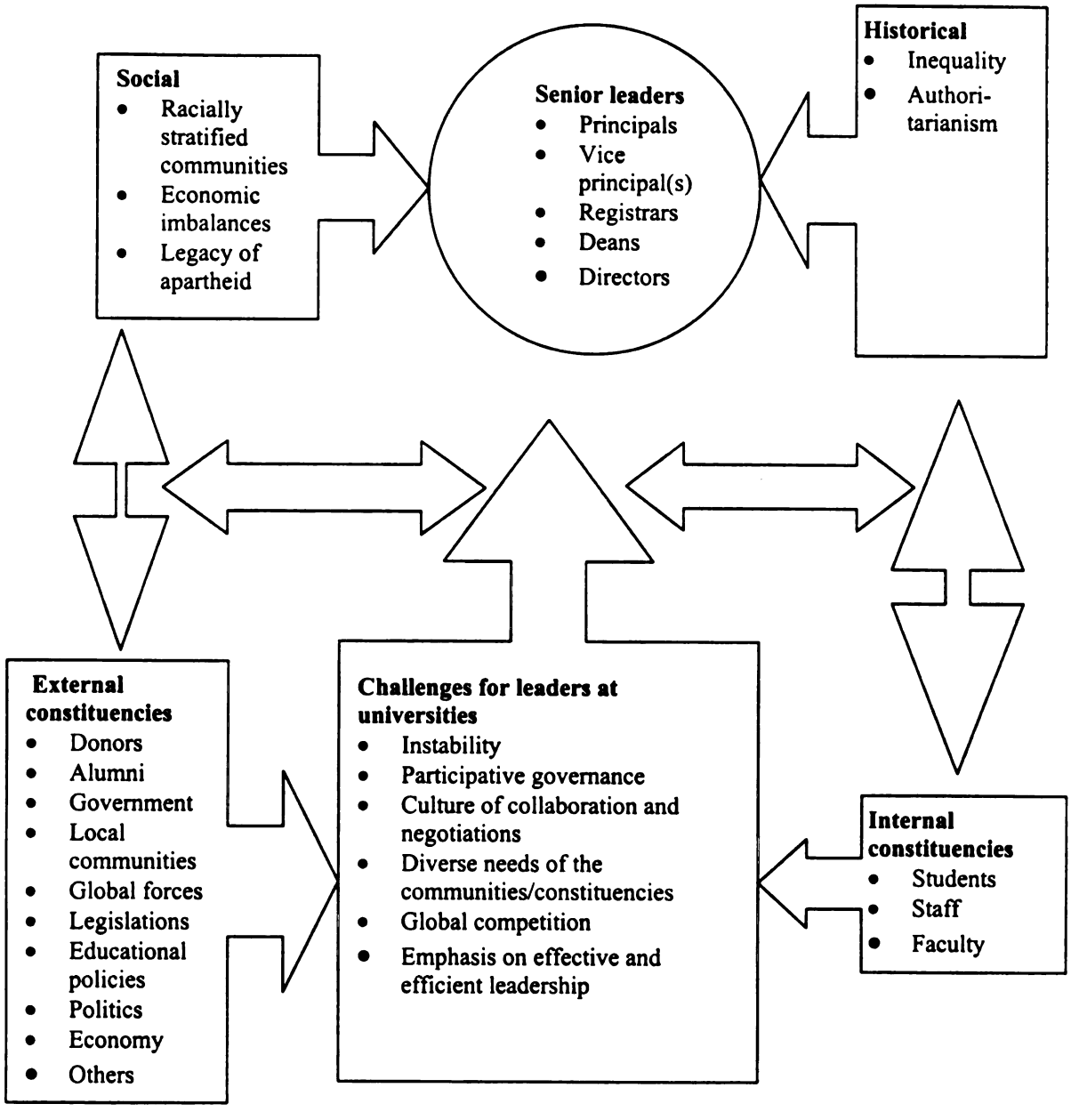

Figure 1: Context in which leaders are situated in South African higher education institutions.

The constructivist grounded theory framework provided a way to study leadership using qualitative research methods. It departs from the traditional modes of research that are still dominant in leadership literature, which focus on behaviors, traits, and the existence of objectively measured outcomes. This framework recognizes that meaning is a product of social negotiations that take place within a specific context and as a result of unique cultural and social histories. It offers a platform to challenge the positivist way of studying leadership, which is based on arguably outmoded behaviorism or on conceptions of truth that correspond with a supposed objectively existent reality (Green, 1997).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

In the discussion that follows, the study design is explained, and the population and sample are described. I discuss the methods of data collection and data analysis and explain how they were used to facilitate the study.

Study Design

This was a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The design and methods of data collection and analysis were guided by the constructivist grounded theory explained in Chapter 2. The design of this study aimed to elucidate information that would help in providing deep, detailed, vivid, and nuanced answers (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) to the following three research questions:

1. What does leadership mean to selected leaders of post-apartheid South African higher education institutions?

2. What influences the post-apartheid South African higher education leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership?

4. How have these understandings of affected their practice of leadership?

Population and Sample

Purposeful sampling and snowballing techniques were used to select participants for this study. The public relations departments or registrar's offices at selected higher education institutions in South Africa were approached for help in identifying and facilitating contact with prospective participants. Eleven institutions were invited to

participate in the study. Letters of invitation were then sent to the identified leaders, briefing them about the study.

Thirty-nine higher education leaders at several universities and technikons were interviewed for this research. I purposefully aimed at achieving race and gender balance in the sample, but this was not always possible because leadership positions at South African higher education institutions tend to reflect the racial stratification and gender biases of apartheid. In other words, blacks and women are still underrepresented in positions of leadership at higher education institutions if one considers the demographics of the country. In some cases a white institution might have a primarily white senior leadership with one black or female senior leader; the reverse might be true for black institutions.

The participants were senior leaders at higher education institutions. They held positions of leadership at the level of vice-chancellor or principal, deputy vice-chancellor or vice-principal, registrar, director of a unit, or a comparable position. All of the participants were entrusted with the day-to-day responsibilities of leading the transformation process at their institutions.

Interviews were conducted at sites selected institutions in South Africa that provided a spread of institutional types. The demographics at these institutions were representative of the racial diversity that exists at higher education institutions in South Africa. In all, I visited 10 sites.

In limiting the data for suitability to the study, I sharpened the focus by confining the data analysis for this study to senior leaders—vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, registrars, and deans—at higher institutions. Thus, five institutions formed

the basis for this study. The interviews with directors of academic or administrative units may be used for further research at a later time.

The 11 participants (see Table 1) included two vice-chancellors (presidents), three deputy vice-chancellors (provosts), two registrars, and four deans. Seven of the participants had their doctorates, and three had postgraduate degrees. One was female and 10 were males. Five were black and six were white. Three participants were of African descent, four of English descent, two of Indian descent, and two of Dutch descent.

Data Collection

The primary instruments used in collecting data were two in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (see Appendix A). These instruments were developed under the guidance of my committee members and piloted among six South African higher education leaders. Three of the six people who participated in the pilot study lived in the United States of America, whereas the other three lived in South Africa. All of the participants in the pilot study held or had held positions of leadership. They were asked to comment on how the interview protocols could be improved. The protocols went through multiple revisions until they complied with the standards set by my dissertation committee and the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) (see Appendix B).

Sources of data for this study were face-to-face semi-structured interviews, notes from the interviews, and written materials provided by the participants or those that were available from the institutions' web sites. These methods of data collection helped to ensure the accuracy of the interview transcriptions and to capture the personal feelings of

Table 1: Profile of the study participants.

Name	Position	Race		Gender		Type of Institution		Ethnicity
Coax	Vice-Chancellor	White		Male		University		English
Charlie	Vice-Chancellor	White		Male			Technikon	Afrikaner
Tambo	Deputy Vice-Chancellor		Black		Female		Technikon	African
Makhenkesi	Deputy Vice-Chancellor		Black	Male		University		African
Langa	Deputy Vice-Chancellor		Black	Male			Technikon	
Charra	Registrar		Black	Male			Technikon	Asian
Van Wyk	Registrar	White		Male		University		Afrikaner
Wellington	Dean	White		Male		University		English
Khoi	Dean		Black	Male		University		Asian
Ackerman	Dean	White		Male			Technikon	English
De Beers	Dean	White		Male		University		English
	Totals	N = 6	N = 5	N = 10	N = 1	N = 6	N = 5	

the participants about their leadership. These methods facilitated a process through which I was able to provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973).

Participants were interviewed over a period of two and a half months, from April through June 2002. Before each interview, participants were asked to sign consent forms that assured them that their identities would remain confidential. Furthermore, the consent forms guaranteed the participants that their privacy, institutional affiliation, and locations would not be disclosed. Instead, pseudonyms were used for participants' names as well as for any institutions and locations mentioned. In direct quotations, the pseudonyms are given in parentheses. The following procedures were used to protect the identity of the participants:

1. Code names would be used in any written or oral reports on the data.

2. In any written or oral report, participants would not be described in sufficient detail to enable readers to determine their identity.

3. The data were to be kept in a locked, secured place during and after the research.

4. The data would be treated in confidence with the members of the dissertation committee.

5. During the transcription process, all of the above-mentioned security measures would be observed. The transcripts would be stored under pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities.

6. Tapes would be kept in a secured safe, and the transcripts would be filed separately.

In-Depth Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I followed up the standard questions with one or more individually tailored questions to get clarification or to probe a person's reasoning (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The individual interview sessions lasted an hour to an hour and a half. Follow-up interviews were conducted, as needed, by returning to the participants or be using the electronic mailing system (e-mail). The interviews were all tape-recorded after the participants granted permission to do so. In addition to the interviews, I took notes during the interview sessions and recorded daily reflections in a diary as a means of capturing my personal thoughts about the interactions with the respondents and their responses.

The interviews were centered on three main issues: (a) the leader's understanding of leadership, (b) influences on the leader's construction of the meaning of leadership, and (c) practical examples in the leader's day-to-day activities that exhibited his or her understanding of leadership. The questions were designed to cover how senior leaders made meaning of leadership in the post-apartheid South African higher education context. Responses to all questions from the interview protocol, as well as responses to probes that were used to gain further information about important statements made by the participants, were included in the data analysis.

The respondents were identified by pseudonyms, to honor the confidentiality agreement. A nontraditional adaptation of member checks ensured the accuracy of the quotations and thereby enhanced the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). I scheduled follow-up meetings to clarify those contradictions, when necessary. Also, I discussed the emerging theory with higher education policy makers and researchers in South Africa and the United States.

Data-Analysis Strategies

The primary aim of the data analysis was to determine how senior leaders in post-apartheid higher education institutions made meaning about leadership. Data were analyzed simultaneously with the data-collection process (Merriam, 1998). The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and cross-case analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) were used. The constant comparative method enabled me to assign meaning to observations expressed in the data (Locke, 2001). To increase my sensitivity, I used this method of data analysis in raising questions about and discovering properties and dimensions that might be in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Cross-case analysis (Denzin & Lincoln (2000) enabled me to look for themes that cut across cases and for individual differences and commonalities. It also helped to deepen my understanding of how leaders in different cultural, historical, social, and organizational contexts constructed their meaning of leadership.

Key ideas expressed by respondents were sorted into categories, themes, and patterns based on the constructivist theoretical frame (Schwandt, 1997). The coding process included four procedures adapted from Strauss and Corbin (1998) that are prevalent in grounded-theory studies: open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and development of a theory.

The interview responses were transcribed verbatim, and emerging themes generated from the interview transcripts were noted. I coded the themes and systematically sorted them according to questions they addressed. I listened repeatedly to the recorded interviews during the data-collection stage and also during the transcription phase. The analysis process was complemented by notes I had taken during the face-to-

face taped interviews, as well as a reflective journal that I kept during the data-collection and data-analysis processes.

During the data analysis, I worked from the data by reading through each interview and searching for statements in which leaders defined leadership, its construction and practice. These statements or themes were coded appropriately in the margins of the transcripts. A list of themes evolved from the interviews, which were later grouped into packs for analysis. Each theme and related quotations were kept together. I maintained a data trail by keeping a set of notes and a numbering system to help trace the quotations and statements to the main transcripts and the individual interviews.

Limitations and Delimitation of the Study

The study had some logistical and methodological limitations, such as the limited availability of leaders at South African higher education institutions. I could not include more women leaders due to a limited pool of such people. Also, due to the limited time available for this study (about two and a half months, April to June), it was not possible to interview people whose schedules would make them unavailable until later in June or July.

Further, relying solely on the interview method has its limitations. Tedrow (1998) observed that interviews are a limited means of gathering information because they cannot provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, I cannot claim to have captured all the nuances about the phenomenon studied in one or two sessions with the participants. In qualitative research, investigators must strive for depth rather than large numbers of respondents. Thus, I chose to focus on responses from only 11 senior leaders in higher education institutions.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA ON THE MEANING OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

The discussion that follows represents interviews with 11 senior leaders at higher education institutions in South Africa. Explored in this chapter are the leaders' perspectives on the meaning of leadership. The constructivist grounded theory was used as a guide in sorting and interpreting the data. I did not attempt to define leadership in this study because meaning-making or sense-making is largely a constructivist activity. I regarded the incumbents' process of understanding the meaning of leadership as a complex one that was shaped largely by a range of experiences. The data presented, therefore, represent the opinions of the respondents and my observations and reactions to and descriptions of what they said about the meaning of leadership.

There were divergent responses concerning what leadership means to senior leaders at South African higher education institutions. The majority of the responses to this question indicated that leadership as a construct is the product of a complex process. The participants in this study cited their experiences in a variety of settings, such as their childhood years, schooling, college, and professional life, as having been responsible for the meanings they assigned to leadership. Therefore, the meaning of leadership tended to emerge from a collection of experiences an individual had acquired over a long period of time.

Many of the participants defined what they understood as the meaning of leadership by describing certain qualities, values, and abilities that a leader should have. Participants often presented these qualities, values, and abilities through reflecting on

their own leadership journey as an illustration of what leadership meant to them, sharing accounts of their experiences, leadership roles, and positions. These accounts clearly indicate the leaders' value systems, struggles, and triumphs.

In some cases, a mentor or someone whom leaders had worked with in an organization before assuming their current position might have exhibited these values and qualities. Therefore, these senior leaders' understanding had been shaped by the contexts in which they had worked.

The data reviewed in this chapter suggest that respondents' meaning of leadership can be organized into three broad categories or themes: (a) leading by example, (b) serving humanity, and (c) having a vision. Each theme encapsulates a number of subthemes, which are incorporated into the discussion of the meaning of leadership. In the following discussion, the three major themes that emerged from the data are presented, along with excerpts from the interview transcripts and my observations.

Leading By Example

Leading by example often is referred to as exemplary or upfront leadership. In other words, a leader has to lead by modeling behaviors and values of the organization or his or her own preferences. Leaders do not ask others to do things that they are incapable of doing themselves. In the following pages, leading by example is discussed under three subthemes: (a) credibility, and (b) empowering others.

Credibility

In the data, credibility was found to be a quality that a senior leader at a higher education institution should possess in order to gain the respect of peers. Many respondents cited credibility as a necessary component of leading by example. Most

leaders equating leading by example with credibility were those who were at the helm of their higher education institutions—that is, vice-chancellors, their deputies, and deans. These leaders at South African higher education institutions were responsible for initiating change at the academic and administrative levels of the institution. Credibility was of the utmost importance to them in convincing others to follow their vision of a transformed academic and administrative environment.

The respondents referred to credibility as an aspect of leading by example that embodies respecting oneself, being trusted, and being a people person. The discussion that follows concerns how senior leaders at South African higher education institutions described the value of credibility in terms of the above-mentioned qualities.

Dean Ackerman, a white senior leader at a historically black technikon, argued that a leader at a higher education institution must be a credible person. In his words, "a leader earns the right to be a leader." The notions of leadership embraced by Ackerman were built on the idea that, in order to lead, one must earn the respect of followers.

Many senior leaders such as Vice-Chancellors Coax and Charlie, who led historically white higher education institutions, believed that respect and authority in come with one's accomplishments. To them, credibility should translate to what they called "academic credibility." From their perspective, senior leaders earn the right to lead if they are eminent teachers and internationally renowned researchers. To these two vice-chancellors, credibility was an important quality that featured prominently in their appointments to their current positions of leadership. Their views about how they had acquired the academic credibility that gave them the right to lead are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, a vice-chancellor of a technikon and an established scientist, argued that a sense of credibility had been bestowed upon him because of his contributions to his field of study. He explained, "I believe I have made my contribution in my field through my research and advocacy for my discipline."

Vice-Chancellor Coax, also an internationally recognized scientist, narrated how his outstanding academic record and research credentials had helped him get his current position:

> I was an A1-rated practicing scientist, which means as a scientist you have to be an international leader. I published over 200 papers with my students. I supervised successfully more than 40 Ph.D. students and have been lucky that I have been recognized by the [Royal Society of Sciences and the South African Academy of Sciences]. So I have some great research credentials and I also come with great teaching credentials, and I won the distinguished teacher award . . . . I use those as examples that I come with a strong academic background. I think that is critical in leading a university because the core business is teaching and research. I have a lot of experience and success, so I speak and lead with credibility. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

This description of the illustrious career of a vice-chancellor at a historically white institution supports the importance of a leader's credibility in leading by example. A majority of leaders in this study mentioned that requirement.

Although Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa had taught at a historically black university for more than 15 years, he believed that the experience of being an academic and a researcher had not adequately prepared him for the challenges of his current job. It should be noted, however, that Langa possessed excellent credentials as an internationally trained scientist, had held leadership positions that involved dealing with students, and headed a department for some time.

In some cases, credibility was often blurred by colleagues' perceptions. An example of this was given by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, a vice-principal at a historically white institution. He related how his appointment process was transparent,

but yet he struggled to gain credibility because of the belief that he was "let in" due to the government's equity policies, which require all higher education institutions to address racial imbalances by reviewing their hiring practices. He asserted, "I was questioned by students, by the unions, and by everybody. I had all the prerequisites. I had the experience, I had the qualifications, and I had everything." Although Tambo had been educated at the best institutions in the world, he still thought his credibility was questioned because he was a black person being appointed to a senior position that no person of color previously had held in the history of the institution.

Most of the leaders interviewed in this study saw credibility as an essential quality for a leader. There was no consensus among respondents about the credentials a leader should possess because at times the best credentials are overshadowed by other variables, such as race, ethnicity, and gender. But excellent teaching and research careers bred credibility for a senior leader at most higher education institutions. Some leaders believed that leadership not only involves being an eminent teacher and researcher, but also might require some managerial prowess.

Another important consideration that emerged from the data was that, even though one might be well suited for the position because of his or her experience, qualifications, and skills, other variables might also influence who earns credibility as a leader, and how that comes about. In a culture where the best and the brightest scholars are sought to lead higher education institutions in South Africa, leading by example through bringing credibility to the position is an appropriate strategy. These senior leaders saw credibility as an important component of leading by example. Most leaders who alluded to the importance of credibility in leading higher education institutions saw

this trait as resulting in respect from peers and reinforcing the collegial culture of higher education institutions.

Empowering Others

In this study, empowering others emerged as a subtheme of leading by example. In this section, empowering others is discussed as it applies to the higher education context, then as it was determined by the participants, and thereafter in terms of four subthemes that emerged from the data: (a) providing opportunities, (b) delegation, (c) mentoring, and (d) being a good teacher. Problems associated with the application of this subtheme also are discussed.

Empowering others has emerged as part of the transformation language at higher education institutions in South Africa. It is embedded in the vocabulary of modern higher education language on transformation. In most cases within the South African context, the word *empowerment* is used to denote a process of liberating previously disadvantaged groups by offering them knowledge and skills. The major beneficiaries of the empowerment drive are black people and women of all races. This also ties empowering others to the commitment of South African higher education institutions to contribute to the development of human resources for the emerging nation. It is also one of the measures for redressing the legacy of apartheid policies that discriminated against blacks and women.

Although they followed diverse routes to positions of leadership, most of the respondents agreed that leadership, among other things, means empowering others. It is similar to the adage, "Lift as you rise."

Definition of empowering others. Most of the respondents who mentioned the concept of empowering others described it as acts of providing opportunities, facilitating

growth, teaching, and delegating. Dean Wellington, a white administrator at a historically white institution who had been a department head for five years and a dean for two years, gave a unique definition of empowering others. He described leading by example as incorporating the mandate of responding to a "high moral imperative," which he described as a "deep belief in the value of human beings, the belief in their development." This definition gave a deeper understanding of what leadership meant in relation to empowering others.

Providing opportunities. The act of providing opportunities emerged as one of the accomplishments that the respondents in this study cited as imperative for those who lead by example; it was considered a subtheme of empowerment. Dean Wellington explained that providing opportunities comprised the "ability to prepare, facilitate, and foster growth in others." According to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, a black leader, leading by example meant involvement in activities such as facilitating and creating opportunities that enabled others to grow within the organization. He further saw providing opportunities as a leadership prerogative that transformed others in the organization into assets rather than liabilities.

Vice-Chancellor Coax tended to see providing opportunities for others as one of his lifetime achievements in an illustrious career in which he had supervised about 40 doctoral candidates and about 30 master's-degree graduates and co-authored more than 200 papers with his students. He spoke of this act of leadership when he said:

> One of my ambitions has been to ensure the success of other people. It is a major step that one makes along the leadership area where you move from getting success yourself from presenting papers, being elected to academies, to no longer doing your own research with your own group, to when you start getting joy out of the success of others. . . . I enjoy the success of other people; that is a major transition for anybody to go through. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Many leaders such as Deans Khoi and Wellington and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi saw providing opportunities for others' growth as one of the acts of leadership. To them, this act of leadership was driven by the commitment Khoi described as "using one's expertise to develop others, recognizing a special niche that is areas that the beneficiaries are good at." Therefore, those who lead by example must recognize the importance of creating and providing opportunities for others, as the respondents suggested. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, the only black member of senior management at his institution, argued that empowering others means not simply giving jobs to people, but also considering the incumbent's potential and the kind of support structure that is available to nurture the individual: "In terms of appointments, that person must have a potential, they must be supported." He further argued that a good leader always makes appointments for the good of the institution.

Delegation. The importance of delegation also frequently emerged in the conversations with senior leaders at South African higher education institutions; however, they expressed divergent views on the extent of delegation. In this discussion of delegation, the stance taken by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, a senior leader at a historically white technikon, needs to be highlighted. Tambo believed that the act of delegation must have boundaries. He added this important aspect to the act of delegation because he believed that delegation can empower others only if there are boundaries, mandates, and clear monitoring measures. Without these, it is just like giving another task to one's subordinates that has no significance to their development.

Registrar Charra, a black man, had worked in academic administration at higher education institutions for more than three decades and, at the time of the study, had been a registrar at this historically black institution for six years. He supported a systematic

view of delegation, reinforcing the belief that delegation is an important attribute of leadership. He saw delegation as "getting the work done without you doing the job." Charra supported a developmental model of delegation, saying that "delegation needs an action plan and monitoring in order to fulfill the accomplishment."

Another senior administrator at a historically black technikon who was supportive of delegation was Vice-Chancellor Langa. He described delegation as "[enabling] others to do the things you do." Langa made clear his argument about delegation in a statement that evidenced his willingness to devolve his power to others: "An important thing is that even when I am going away for a day or two, I make sure that there is a manager who acts in my position." Langa noted that delegation has its challenges, much like Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo's statement regarding the need for boundaries. Although others believed that delegation was a problem, Langa argued that delegation was problematic only for those colleagues who were reluctant to delegate because they feared their inefficiencies might be exposed if they allowed others to do their jobs. However, he believed that this was a shortsighted view of delegation and a failure of others to lead by example.

In closing this discussion on delegation, it can be said that Registrar Charra's notions on the subject of delegation seemed to stem from his belief that strong leaders tend to turn out strong subordinates. Therefore, many leaders viewed delegation as one of the forms of leading by example. Registrar Charra and others subscribed to this notion of good leadership starting from the top and building on delegation in empowering others. This brings us to the next aspect of empowering others, which is mentoring others.

Mentoring others. This aspect of empowerment rests on the premise that a leader also serves as a mentor. In this study, senior leaders at higher education institutions in South Africa portrayed empowerment in relation to how they were mentored by those with whom they worked and how they, in turn, mentored their students and colleagues. Conversely, some of the leaders cited their educational backgrounds as having empowered them for their current positions.

Mentoring as leadership is illustrated in the following remarks by Vice-Chancellor Coax, a white principal at a premier historical white institution, who strongly believed in this type of leadership:

> You can see from my career that I have spent my lifetime in universities, so that obviously influenced me, the various institutions I have been in. I was particularly influenced by my eight years as a deputy vice-chancellor under the leadership of [Maslow], who was vice-chancellor at the [City University] during that time, and I learned, I think, a huge amount from him. . . . He had a major influence on me; those eight years or so as a deputy vice-chancellor **were** crucial. I had the opportunity to observe and learned with regard to . . . the running of a university, so that was crucial. Also, I have been and had the experience of being head of department for many years. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

This quotation indicates that others mentored Coax, and his progression from being an academic administrator to being a leader of an institution was aided by many who were committed to producing the kind of leader he had become.

Therefore, to many of these leaders, most of them whites who were working in historically white institutions, empowerment had become integral to their vocabulary of what leadership means. This view had been shaped by their experiences and a sense of commitment and gratitude to those who dedicated their energies in mentoring them. In contrast, black leaders in the sample of 11 did not mention mentors in their lives, but rather believed that their ideas about leadership had come from their own educational experiences.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that the data presented a higher education landscape that was full of accounts of how blacks and women were kept at the periphery of the leadership realm. Few women and blacks occupied leadership positions at higher education institutions in the early 1990s. That is why mentorship and professional development (further study) remain as possible ways for blacks and women to ascend to positions of leadership. Leaders from both historically black technikons, such as Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa and Registrar Charra, had added a master's degree in business administration (MBA) to their qualifications. Langa believed that he had not been afforded good mentors.

The differences between black and white leaders in this study indicate that there were different routes to leadership for senior leaders of higher education institutions in South Africa. Discrepancies still exist between white and black administrators in terms of skills, abilities, and knowledge. These differences need to be considered when addressing leadership development.

Being a good teacher. Another aspect of empowering others is being a good teacher; that is, the act of teaching is a tool in empowering others. Although being a good teacher has been considered as a subtheme under empowering others, participants in this study used many phrases to refer to this aspect. Two of those phrases, discussed in the following paragraphs, are "commitment to shaping young minds" and "teaching as a calling."

Commitment to shaping young minds: To some leaders, the commitment to shaping young minds was one of the major attractions for those who lead higher education institutions and work as academics. Proponents of this view were Vice-Chancellor Coax, who had won a distinguished teaching award; Vice-Chancellor Charlie,

a renowned scientist who had spent most of his time as a researcher; Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, an academic and administrator who had taught at higher education institutions and practiced as an administrator in the public sector; and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, an educator who had spent most of his time breaking new ground for people of color and empowering black youths through education.

Almost half of the senior leaders in this study shared a commitment to teaching or shaping young minds. The majority of the leaders who held this view occupied top positions at their institutions. Vice-Chancellor Coax exhibited a commitment to teaching when he was asked to reflect on how students thought of him as a leader. When speaking of his experiences in shaping young minds, he illustrated that teaching is an exciting activity:

> I have been an academic. I think one of the most precious things of being an academic is that you are always being exposed to young people, until you go into companies, where that doesn't occur and you see the difference. We are always exposed to the brightest young minds every year all the time, and I find this very exciting and very challenging. That is why I became the distinguished teacher. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, who believed that a higher education leader should be a top scholar, viewed being a distinguished teacher as a necessary attribute for a leader. This belief in the necessity of being a good teacher was driven by the understanding that teaching is a vehicle of emancipation. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, who had spent most of his teaching career among underprivileged students and in under-resourced environments, stressed the importance of being a good teacher when he explained what leadership meant to him:

> An institution needs a leader who is very good at teaching. A leader should be a facilitator of teaching, [a] facilitator of research, and our research base should address the needs of the community. A leader should facilitate community service, project-based and problem-based curriculum. (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002).

The notions about teaching that Makhenkesi introduced illustrate the importance of good teaching in facilitating growth within the organization. From this premise comes a belief that leaders should see teaching as a calling, a chance to dedicate themselves to this empowering act.

Teaching as a calling: In this context, the term *calling* seems to suggest a great commitment to empowering others by dedicating one's energies to service for others. It appeals to a high moral purpose of developing skills, abilities, and knowledge for the advancement of others. When Dean Wellington, who had been a dean at a historically white institution for about five years, was asked to explain what it meant to him to have a high moral imperative, he described how teaching as a calling should energize staff. He said, "One is driven from within to create opportunities for others." This unique understanding of teaching as a profession in which people should look beyond the position as a source of employment and focus on how they can transform people's lives and contribute for the collective benefit of society emerged many times in the interviews.

Vice-Chancellor Tambo, who believed that his life exhibited such a calling, argued that the teacher in him was inseparable from his leadership. The following excerpt illustrates how his life embodied teaching as a calling:

> I started teaching . . . at a high school in [Polokwane] . . . at the height of the riots when they started in 1976. I was then teaching languages at the matric level. I was still an assistant teacher; then, in a space of about two years, I was promoted to head of the department of languages, and then I joined [Malan] High School. I was one of the founding members of the school and the only black who held a senior position as head of department. What was unique about [Malan] High is that the building was there, [but] there were no students. This took place in [Gauteng]; there were no students to take advantage of this opportunity. We actually took students from the streets. Some of them were doing standard 8 and 9, and we told ourselves that we were going to do it. The principal was a mathematician, and we had about three to five other staff members. When the first results came out of JC, on our first enrollment we beat all the schools in [Gauteng]. From there, I did a B.Ed. and was recruited by the university of [Oasis]. I was the first black to join the faculty of education. [Oasis] University

was very challenging because of the history of Oasis. (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002)

The preceding quotation illustrates how Tambo's life exhibited his commitment to teaching. He provided leadership by moving into a frontier where other black people were not venturing. Tambo found himself there because he believed that teaching was his calling, and he had to provide the needed leadership in that respect.

Serving Humanity

A second major theme that emerged from the data on the meaning of leadership was serving humanity. This theme was captured in many words and phrases, such as *being accessible, love for the people, having compassion, being a people person, respect for others, fairness,* and *humility.* For the purpose of this discussion, I looked at the meaning of these concepts in relation to leadership, to provide an in-depth presentation and analysis of how these words and phrases relate to serving others.

Although the respondents used many phrases to refer to serving humanity, four recurring subthemes are discussed in this section: (a) love for people, (b) humility, (c) commitment to social justice, and (d) being a good listener. Leaders often alluded to these themes in exhibiting their commitment to service. These subthemes represent deeper human qualities that a leader should have before he or she can exhibit what is known as service leadership or servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002).

In defining service to humanity, the participants brought out the familiar notion of servant leadership, which has been defined as "a practical philosophy, which supports people who choose to serve first, then lead as a way of expanding service" (Greenleaf, 2000). This philosophy of leadership espoused by Greenleaf is a way of looking at leadership, not as a means of exercising power and authority but rather as an act of love

for people, requiring humility, commitment to social justice, and good listening skills. A commitment to serving others emerged from the data in many ways and confirmed that it is another way of framing what leadership means to senior leaders at higher education institutions in South Africa.

Love for People

Bolman and Deal (2001) described love for people as "the deepening of the sense of appreciation, respect, and ability to reach out and open one's heart." Love for people calls for a deep sense of commitment to be a servant of the people. This theme presupposes that most leaders accept positions of leadership because they believe such positions will allow them to be part of a bigger vision geared at serving humanity.

In bringing together love for people with leadership, Dean Wellington viewed his leadership as a means of nurturing love for the profession of teaching and the ability to create a workplace where faculty and staff could be of service to humanity. He explained, "I value enormously individual callings being a place where people can live their calling in life. To find individual dreams and goals can contribute to a bigger vision. Someone is there because they are meeting their goals and our goals and vision" (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002). Judging from this statement, love for humanity cannot be totally divorced from issues of empowerment. This statement also makes love for people an important impulsion for service leadership. In the data, serving humanity was portrayed as not just an act of assuming leadership within an organization, but as requiring a stronger sense of commitment to the people with and for whom one works.

When I asked Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi to reflect on how his colleagues viewed his leadership, he acknowledged that he frequently was referred to as

"pastor." Because of his love for the people, he often was mistakenly thought of as being soft or a lenient administrator. But the following account refutes that misconception, showing instead his passion for service:

> What I picked up is that my love for people is my weakness. . . . Students feel at home, always come to me for advice. I love students. I believe that students are our clients. I talked to students about student fees, called management, and they advised me to the contrary. I defied them and their decision and addressed the concerns of students and managed to defuse a volatile situation. (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002)

Because he epitomizes these qualities of leadership, Makhenkesi is an example of a true servant for the people because he leads with his soul and gives not only his time but also his heart to the challenge of being a service leader.

Serving humanity as a leader in the higher education context of South Africa should not be construed as an easy task. Those who have dedicated their lives to this, such as some respondents in this study, face a number of challenges. The literature on leadership does not romanticize what it means to lead a higher education institution, especially in South Africa. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa, who related the real challenges for leadership in the post-apartheid higher education context, listed a number of institutions that had had leadership problems that led senior leaders to resign their positions. He reflected on the instability and chaos perpetuated by many senior leaders' lack of preparation for dealing with transformation issues:

> If one looks at 1998, 1999 . . . in 1999 alone, about six vice-chancellors at historically disadvantaged campuses were suspended. Fort Hare was a similar case, UNITRA was the same case, I think another one was Durban Westville, Mangosuthu Technikon, University of the North, and University of North West. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Langa's account makes one aware of challenges faced by leaders at higher education institutions. It is only out of a sense of service to humanity that senior leaders have been committed to serve at historically black institutions despite the pressures

exerted on them in those environments. In their commitment to serve humanity, they are risking the reputations they have built over the years just to make a contribution to the transformation of South African higher education. The post-1994 era in South African higher education is full of accounts of vice-chancellors and other senior leaders having resigned from or been forced out of their positions due to pressure from students and other stakeholders (Kulati & Moja, 2002).

Serving humanity, especially as it pertains to the theme of love for people, entails leading with little possibility of making unilateral decisions. The idea of serving humanity entails a level of commitment in which "people work the common good, and for the opportunity to realize their full human potential. De Pree (1997) argued that organizations should become places of realized potential. Other leaders who believed in this value of serving humanity, such as Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, Deans Wellington and Ackerman, and Registrar Van Wyk, thought their commitment to this aspect of leadership was largely influenced by the realization that leadership is about passion, not position.

Dean Wellington saw the acceptance of other people's views as one of the prerequisites for serving others. He asserted, "I have passion and zest for living [and] for what I am doing. I like things to be exciting and fun. I do have a strong sense of belief in what is right. I try to balance the *can be* and *ought to be* and accepting other people's views" (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002). This statement indicates that serving humanity makes demands on a leader because leading through service requires that the leader work closely with the people he or she is serving. Accepting others' viewpoints is one of the ways a leader can ensure that he or she is still being of service to others.

Dean Ackerman presented leadership as a mutual exercise driven by the passion to serve. "People tend to follow you because they want to, not because you tell them they ought to. There is consultation and sharing of leadership" (Ackerman, personal interview, May 2002). This statement reiterates the fact that servant leadership is a voluntary act that is supported by followers. One is a leader because people let him or her lead.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, reflecting on how others regarded him as a leader, said he felt humbled by the idea that students largely thought of him as Mother Teresa. He said, "The teacher in me is very strong. Students have a high regard for me. Almost all. They think I am this Mother Teresa" (Tambo, personal interview, May 2002). This idea evokes the image of the great humanitarian, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, who was later known as Mother Teresa, a Macedonian nun who emerged as the leader of the Order of the Missionaries of Charity, dedicated to serving the poor throughout the world. Mother Teresa's ideals were that "Our people deserve the joy of human love" (Mother Teresa website, 1997). She advocated the ideal of commitment to serving others with love, thus exhibiting the spiritual dimension of service as a leader. Vice-Chancellor Maggie provided a complementary viewpoint of serving humanity as he made humility a necessary element of this aspect of leadership.

Humility

The concept of humility emerged from the data as one of the essential values reflected by a service leader. This dimension of leadership was described as being interconnected to love for humanity, and as an important value for leaders of higher education institutions. It subscribes to the principle that education should make one more humble and denounces earlier notions of leadership held by higher education leaders

during apartheid, characterized by arrogance and disrespect for human rights, democratic principles, and human dignity (Moja & Kulati, 2002). In this context senior leaders respected their colleagues and were humbled by the honor of being asked to serve others.

Humility as an aspect of serving others calls for leaders who adhere to principles associated with a sense of modesty and sensitivity. It requires leaders to promote high morale in those around them by understanding group dynamics, democratic practices, human relations, and the use of motivation (Owen, 1988).

Humility as an attribute of serving humanity was well captured by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, an administrator who had been trained outside South Africa. He described his education and as a transformative experience. It helped him denounce his earlier notions of leadership as based on positional power and status:

> When I got there[to the university of the Midwest] the notion of a title was done away with, and it made academic leaders more accessible. That is one thing I think I adopted—that leadership to me is not [solely] about academic qualification. It is that plus your personality, plus your outlook, plus your ability to accept new demands, and your ability to be vulnerable at times. But also being able to say no without feeling guilty, when you are convinced of what you are doing, that is what leadership is to me. (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002)

The preceding statement illustrates how a university culture of egalitarianism helps to foster new ideas about leadership. Tambo, who had been a political activist during the time of apartheid, acknowledged that when one subscribes to serving with humility, there are prerequisites such as willingness to accept new demands and being vulnerable at times. The higher education context, although it is not perfect, reinforces service ideals such as doing collaborative work and serving, de-emphasizing power and authority.

This notion was clearly illustrated by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, a strong advocate of collaborative work between higher education institutions and local communities. He said he had displayed his leadership by "loving people and doing the

best I could for the people." He acknowledged that his approach to collaboration was informed by scholarship on development. He highlighted the works of writers such as James Yen, who believed that in any development work there are latent rules that require leaders to "stay with the people, live with the people, build on what the people have, learn from the people, and train by example. You need to plan with them, involve them, and together work with the people" (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002). Yen's ideas, expressed by Makhenkesi, illustrate the need for service-oriented leadership, which requires a humble leader.

The respondents in this study tended to connect humility with empowerment activities. Dean De Beers's account indicated the influence of mentoring in producing people who consider humility an important leadership attribute. Humility as an attribute of leadership geared at service was also witnessed by De Beers, a social scientist who worked at a historically white institution. "The professor I had, who was an amazingly modest man, treated his students with respect," he said. Based on this example, De Beers himself modeled service leadership. He viewed leadership as a practice that "should be open, with no hidden agendas. It should not be manipulative and needs to respect different opinions, and respect holders of different opinions" (De Beers, personal interview, May 2002). It is this collaborative nature of leadership that leads to humility because a leader recognizes the people he or she works with as important partners in furthering the mission of the organization. Those who subscribe to the phenomenon of leading with humility recognize that colleagues and subordinates have a contribution to make in the organization. This underscores the importance of being a fair and just leader in order to discharge one's duties with humility, recognizing that what one does is for service to others.

Commitment to Social Justice

Participants reported commitment to social justice as an act of leadership that South African higher education leaders must embrace. In the South African context, this commitment is aimed at addressing a specific social ill—the disparities created by a disproportionate allocation of resources based on race. Leadership in this context tends to address equity and access as mandated by South Africa's higher education policies.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi and Dean Khoi saw commitment to social justice as encapsulating elements of fairness and justice. Illustrating his belief in the basic tenets of fairness, Makhenkesi quoted the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would like others to do to you."

Although social justice featured prominently in these South African higher education leaders' definition of leadership, Dean Jones, an expert I consulted on this research, admonished against blind subscription to this notion. "I do not want you to leave this country with a romanticized notion that all leaders subscribe to social justice," he said. He went on to say,

> The democratic and the social justice models have gone. Leaders are now concerned with the bottom line, the money, get the subsidies, and get the contracts from government. There is a new economic and managerial leadership. Social justice is no longer an important issue around leadership.

In most cases, Jones said, the issue of social justice is just rhetoric.

On the other hand, because South Africa's history is full of incidences of discrimination and unfair treatment of many people on the basis of their skin color, there is a shared belief in and commitment to social justice, from which has developed a self-monitoring environment. South Africans are sensitive to any form of discrimination or unfair treatment of others. This has led some leaders such as Vice-Chancellor Charlie to

adopt the motto, "I will at all times respect the rights of other people." This motto, which speaks to social justice, was widely shared by senior leaders at his institution.

Charlie's life was characterized by incidents in which human beings were humiliated and hurt by others because of their skin color. In fact, he led the integration of residence halls at his institution before 1994. In the interview, he recalled an incident in which a higher education leader was prepared to humiliate a respected member of the public because he did not have the same skin color as the leader:

> This was around 1975. It was a special 10-year anniversary of the University of [Ebony]; they had a special concert in the opera house of Ebony. They invited all types of dignitaries to attend, and they invited the librarian of Marshals, which is a suburb of [Ebony]. He had a name that was Afrikaans, so the organizers did not know that he was a colored man and gave him a VIP seat at the front of the hall. When he arrived, he went in with his ticket, only to be asked by the institution's public relations officer to leave. That was disgraceful to me, and [it was] painful in a physical sense. . . . It made a tremendous impact [on me]. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

To Charlie, experiences such as this one solidified his commitment to issues of social justice. He encouraged people at his institution to commit themselves to respecting others, irrespective of their race or background. He was a true proponent of human rights in higher education.

In considering issues of fairness and justice, Registrar Van Wyk extended the meaning of leadership to include a commitment to "decisions [that are] morally correct, fair, and just." Dean Khoi, a black leader serving at a historically white institution, argued for social justice in leadership when he reflected on how those who report to him would think of him as a leader: "They would say I am a very fair person, and [that I] believe in justice." Like Khoi, many leaders, both black and white, in South African higher education would like to be seen as people who have embraced issues of fairness and justice. Yet there still is no consensus on what these concepts mean, how past

discrimination should be addressed, and how minorities' rights should be preserved. It is, therefore, important for leaders to be good listeners in order to find ways to make sense of these divergent views on social justice issues.

Being a Good Listener

The attribute of being a good listener is another subtheme of leadership geared to serving humanity. Listening, in this study, was portrayed as being critical in the definition of leadership and a quality that a leader should possess. Most participants described themselves as good listeners. To be good listeners, leaders have to develop a positive attitude, a way of relating to superiors, colleagues, subordinates, and the world around them. This activity of leadership entails actions like paying attention to detail.

A leader of a higher education institution in South Africa is operating in an environment in which there are many voices to be heard. These voices present a high level of ambiguity, as different stakeholders have diverse needs that at times create tensions within the system. A listening leader is expected to be able to receive information from various stakeholders and process it to help him or her make informed decisions. Being a good listener entails listening to people and hearing what they intend to communicate to the leader, which might be coded in their voiced and nonverbal communication. A good listener does not draw conclusions about what another individual is communicating based on preconceived notions, but probes to try to gain an understanding of people's concerns. A leader is called upon to understand that different people might communicate the same message in diverse ways. Hence, being a good listener is a purposeful activity geared toward providing leadership that is capable of smoothing the anxieties and frustrations of human beings within the organization or institution.

Deputy Vice-Chancellors Makhenkesi and Tambo both saw listening as an attribute of leadership geared at serving humanity. To expand on this understanding of leadership, Makhenkesi explained why he regarded himself as a good listener: "I am a person who can listen, a person that people can talk to. I live for students. I believe that students are our clients" (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002).

Being a good listener seems to be tied to a passion for service. Makhenkesi's remark "I live for students" captures his commitment to their welfare. It is also interesting that colleagues referred to Makhenkesi as "pastor." To him, this title honored his dedication to the act of listening and service leadership. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo had a similar title that equated him to Mother Teresa, also because of his dedication to service and his ability to be a good listener. This quality of being a good listener came up again when he said, "I have learned to listen, and I am regarded as a Mother Teresa figure. I have the ability to translate my mothership role into my work. I have the ability to speak all [South African] languages and the ability to relate to all cultural contexts" (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002).

The preceding quotation highlights the complexities associated with being a good listener. Listening was seen as a means of serving humanity, whereby the leader gives credibility to other people's stories, which may address their fears, frustrations, and failures in life. Such a leader understands that serving humanity means being accessible to people so that you can develop the trust necessary for them to let you listen to their stories. The listener needs to be objective at all times and empathize with the person or group sharing their story.

According to Dean De Beers, good listening not only requires objectivity, but also explores the problem in order to arrive at a solution with the storyteller. He explained

how he had learned this leadership skill: "My area of study is philosophy; it teaches you to listen sympathetically and to be critical. It teaches you to analyze arguments and put emphasis on persuasion."

In sum, many of the respondents mentioned listening as a critical skill necessary for leadership aimed at serving humanity. There was also a realization that this facet of leadership connects a leader with the people he or she serves and requires a patient, loving, and caring person. From the data presented on the theme of serving humanity, it was seen that service is a complex leadership activity that was shared by all of the leaders in this study. It also was seen that service leadership is about one's passion and is also regarded as a calling. Leaders who operate in this mode are expected to use their skills, abilities, and knowledge for the benefit of others. Serving humanity encompasses being available to people, serving one's group with humility, and discharging one's responsibilities as a leader with love, fairness, and respect for the job and the people one leads.

Having a Vision

The data indicate that no conceptualization of leadership is complete without addressing the issue of having a vision. In this section, having a vision is discussed in terms of two subthemes that emerged from the data analysis: ability to communicate and ability to sell a vision. The concept of leadership as having a vision is a multifaceted one, especially as it relates to the South African context. All of the respondents cited having a vision as an important facet of leadership.

Definition

In the literature, having a vision as an aspect of leadership was defined as "the capacity to look beyond the moment into the vast potential of tomorrow" (Robinson, 1998, p. 1). This definition can be equated with having a dream. It is more about what can be achieved or what we can become, than what we are or what has been. Therefore, this theme as it relates to what it means to be a leader suggests that there can be no fruitful leadership activity without a vision. Furthermore, a leader must be able to communicate that vision in an unambiguous fashion. Because most of the respondents saw having a vision as an ability to motivate others to share the leader's or group's dream, they engaged in activities and joined forces with others to achieve the envisioned goals.

Ability to Communicate

Participants saw the ability to communicate as involving two different activities: making your ideas known to the group of people you, as a leader, are targeting and convincing others that this is the way to go. These activities might seem to be interrelated, but they should also be seen as separate activities that are essential for leadership. Registrar Charra and Vice-Chancellor Coax cited communication as a critical skill for those in leadership positions. Charra, a senior leader at a historically black technikon, believed that there could be no discussion of leadership without touching on vision. He expanded on his belief about having a vision by highlighting the importance of communication as an indispensable skill that a leader should possess: "I think any leader would need to possess certain attributes, you know, certain skills . . . communication skills, the manner in which you get on with your staff, your subordinates, and also the people you are accountable to" (Charra, personal interview, May 2002).

It became evident from the data that communication is a necessary attribute of leadership. In reflecting on the meaning of leadership, Vice-Chancellor Coax was quick to point out that communication was essential: "There are a number of qualities; you must be able to interact and you must be able to communicate and consult, and you've got to be a leader capable of making decisions when they need to be made" (Coax, personal interview, May 2002).

Vice-Chancellors Coax and Charlie, in their discussions of what leadership meant to them, cited the benefits of having a visible and accessible message in one's leadership. Charlie, who had been a principal at his institution for more than three decades, described visibility as "keeping the mission of the institution known at all times and talking about it in most gatherings, so as to keep your followers focused and committed to the ideal you share." Coax, who had been an institutional head for about six years and a senior leader for 14 years, explained what it means to be accessible as a leader:

> I think I have a very open-door policy, so I am accessible to anybody; student or staff is guaranteed to see me within 24 hours. I think that is very important. I think I have the ability to communicate, people trust me, and I can interact with them meaningfully. I think that is very important. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

A strong believer in communication, Coax explained how he interacted with people on campus:

> A thing that I do, it makes me available, is every two years I go and visit every department. I spend at least two hours with all the academics. This can be described as walking the faculty clock, so everybody knows me, [I am] very accessible, and that has paid off. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Although Vice-Chancellor Charlie strongly believed in being accessible, he communicated his message in a slightly different fashion, through an activity that he called "walking the corridors." He kept members of his management team focused on the institution's mission as well as some of his own ideas, especially those pertaining to

social justice. All senior members embraced his motto "I will at all times respect the rights of others" as a shared value of the institution. In sum, all senior leaders embraced the importance of communication to sharing one's vision. There was also a growing realization that having a vision is not enough; a vision needs to be communicated to others until it is shared by many in the organization.

Ability to Sell a Vision

Selling a vision is the first step toward attaining the desired goals. To some participants, this activity included using gentle persuasion so that people could share their views. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi touched on selling a vision as one of the defining activities of leadership. He stated that providing or selling a vision is an essential leadership challenge as it gives significance to a sense of shared values. That is why he believed that "Leadership gets everybody on board. A leader in a higher education institution [needs] to bring the academics, service, and administrative staff to rally around a vision." Makhenkesi's statement about getting everybody on board suggests an important part of framing the meaning of leadership, a process whereby a leader sells his or her vision to others. At this stage, the caliber of leadership determines how others will be persuaded to buy into the leader's vision. In discussing the subject of shared vision, Kotter (1996) argued for selling a vision first to a critical mass who would, in turn, help disseminate the leader's ideas to others. Selling a vision also requires a leader who is prepared to convince his or her followers that the vision is worth buying into.

Registrar Van Wyk saw leadership as going beyond putting forth a vision. A leader also needs the "ability to make that vision come about," which can be done by using resources and leading people. Through this process, a leader energizes his or her

constituency and keeps their spirits high by making sure that they stay committed to the vision. The understanding of having a vision as an important facet in constructing the meaning of leadership was clarified by Dean Wellington's statement concerning his motivation for leadership: "I am challenged by the principle that keeps people fixed on the bigger picture."

Dean Wellington also spoke of a moral dimension in leadership. He argued that having a vision determines the mission of faculty: "Our vision is driven by a deep sense that the faculty exists in order to contribute to the quality of education in this region. The moral imperative is on how can we best do this: delivery of quality education." He expanded on the topic of vision by asserting that solely having a vision is not enough; having a sense of commitment to that vision is imperative in giving meaning to leadership: "The vision is our calling; we need to create structures in order to fit that vision. It is the way we relate to the soul searching we do, driven by our reason for being here."

Wellington's statement helps to illustrate that, to these leaders, the meaning of leadership carried a deeper sense of dedication to ideals having a spiritual dimension. In this sense, having a vision was seen as being driven by a higher moral purpose to serve and also as having a strong reflective practice in deciding what matters and why it is important to the organization and one's followers.

Having a vision often was equated with being engaged in experimentation. Dean Jones advocated experimentation by leaders at higher education institutions as one way of providing leadership. Higher education organizations are centers of research, teaching, and community service. These are knowledge-production centers with leaders who portray the characteristic Registrar Van Wyk identified when reflecting on his leadership.

He stated, "I am a strong leader, determined, knowing what I want, being prepared to make the sacrifices that need to be done, lobbying hard for resources." This high sense of self and commitment to one's goals builds very well on providing leadership that keeps the big picture in focus.

Another idea that emerged from the theme of having a vision was the use of gentle persuasion. This involves using diplomacy and convincing others that one's way of thinking about the future of the organization is worth dedicating one's energies, skills, and abilities to make it a reality. This can be a challenge for many people, but Dean De Beers, Vice-Chancellor Coax, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo all presented it as an important dimension of having a vision. Tambo spoke of how he and his colleagues were determined to beat the system of apartheid at its own game. The following excerpt illustrates how commitment to the bigger picture enabled them to counter the negative impact of apartheid. He indicated that, as you grow,

> You are aware of the unequal social relationship in which we study. You are also aware of the unequal resources between black and white institutions, [which] can either affirm you as a person or reaffirm you. These factors have a great impact on your sense of self. Socially and also politically, when I compare ourselves with the current students, we had only one major enemy, that was the system [government of apartheid], with the result that it was easy for us to pool our energies and face one thing to beat the system. We had to make it work. We had to prove it to the system that we were superior to the product that they wanted you to be. And I can tell you, almost all of us from that era are in very high positions in the country, all of us, as young people who were infused with that black leadership at that time, and we all made it. (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002)

The data from this study suggest that the South African higher education leaders who were interviewed were committed to a vision of shared leadership and consultation, as evidenced by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa's statement about shared leadership. In the following quotation, Langa responded to a question about what leadership meant to him:

> I would think that leadership in general, that I am comfortable with, is leadership where there is a sharing. It is not actually in the sense of debating or directing and so on, but it is very important to actually share with your manager and everybody else, in other words information sharing, and to take into cognizance the contributions of the members. So teamwork, in other words, is much more challenging than the individual. For instance, if one looks at total quality management, the early notion in Western countries was to look at the individual. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Although participants in this study espoused shared leadership, certain frustrations came with the culture of collegiality. Registrar Van Wyk, a white registrar who had worked for a nonprofit organization before assuming his present position, related his experiences in this environment of change:

> The nature of the institution dictates your style. A university is a democratic place, and leadership is by committee. . . . I run exams. We have two sessions; I want to have three sessions. To achieve any change, it has to go through a committee, [although] this is an administrative decision. (Van Wyk, personal interview, June 2002)

Summary

In sum, from the data presented, it can now be understood that having a vision is an integral part of what leadership means. There were divergent views and strategies on how to strive for a shared vision. This discussion brought out the complexities of communication, as well as the process that leads people to buy into the institutional vision. Although there are rich data on this topic in the leadership literature, the South African context made possible an interesting case study on how different leaders, kept in isolation from each other and the broader world through apartheid, have developed complex means of navigating the challenges presented by their peculiar situations and defining what leadership means to them.

The meaning of leadership represented certain qualities, values, and abilities that a leader should have. The leaders' own struggles and triumphs in life were presented as

an illustration of what leadership meant to them. In most cases, the meaning of leadership represented an amalgamation of experiences that had shaped the incumbents' values about what their mission in life should be. Leadership, therefore, was seen as a vehicle to enact the leaders' values system within a particular context.

CHAPTER 5

CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEANING OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

The second major research question concerned what influences the post-apartheid South African higher education leaders' construction of meaning of leadership. Five subthemes evolved during the coding and analysis of the data that helped to categorize the major factors that influenced respondents' construction of the meaning of leadership. These themes or factors were (a) race, (b) education and, (c) religion and politics, (d) family, and (e) gender.

In this chapter, race is presented as a dominant factor that had a tremendous influence on how these leaders constructed the meaning of leadership. Education and experiences emerged as the second prominent sphere of influence on the leaders as they constructed the meaning of leadership. This was followed by religion and politics, two interrelated areas of influence shaping respondents' values concerning leadership. Family was the fourth major influence on respondents' beliefs about leadership. Gender was the final factor that influenced leaders' conception of their roles as leaders, in one case what it meant to be a woman leader in higher education in post-apartheid South Africa.

The ensuing discussion is organized according to the factors cited above, presented in the order of frequency with which they were reported by the respondents. The construction of the meaning of leadership is discussed from the leaders' perspective, with the realization that there are a number of influences on how meaning about any phenomenon is constructed. I am presenting these stories with the understanding that the

respondents' process of constructing their meaning of leadership was a complex one, shaped by experiences and values garnered throughout various phases of their lives. The data presented in this chapter represent the respondents' opinions as well as my analysis and sense-making about the data.

Factors Influencing Leaders' Construction of the Meaning of Leadership

Race

Race was the most influential factor when sample members constructed the meaning of leadership. Although I framed the constructs of race and gender as related issues in the interview protocol, the respondents singled out race as a major influence on their construction of the meaning of leadership. In the ensuing discussion, respondents' subjective accounts of the effect of race on their construction of the meaning of leadership are addressed. The way leaders described the influence of race on their understandings of leadership reflected their experiences within the socio-historical and political context of South Africa.

The majority of leaders said that race played the most significant part in their construction of the meaning of leadership. To them it was the most defining element of their lives because of the prominence that has been given to racial issues in South Africa. In the old South Africa, race defined who you were, where you could live, what kinds of amenities would be available to you, the kind of job you might hold, the kind of school you could attend, and the types of resources you would have available. In post-apartheid South Africa, the government has enacted laws prohibiting the use of race in adverse ways, but the influences of old discriminatory racial patterns still exist.

Data in this study corroborated the fact that the government and its supporters suppressed the black majority in South Africa during apartheid; this practice affected

both black and white South Africans. Respondents initially were reluctant to relate personal stories portraying the impact that race had had on their lives. However, after a number of probes, all of the respondents who related experiences relating to the role race had played in their leadership spoke passionately about the topic.

The majority of white participants who spoke about the role that race played in their construction of the meaning of leadership tended to portray it as a nuisance during the time of apartheid. For the younger leaders, it was still a troubling factor, even in the democratic era. The respondents who were most concerned about this issue were white leaders who thought that race had compromised their prospects for leadership. On the other hand, black leaders also complained about how past imbalances had deprived them and their communities of opportunities for development.

In the sample of 11 leaders, two white vice-chancellors who worked at historically white higher education institutions argued that they were not adversely affected by race in the new South Africa. On the other hand, the two black deputy vice-chancellors who worked at historically black higher education institutions, a white registrar who worked at a historically white institution, and two white deans who worked at a historically black institution and a historically white institution, respectively, bitterly complained about the threat that race presented to their leadership positions in the post-apartheid dispensation.

Black leaders were concerned with the imbalances that were created by the apartheid government and that still continued to haunt them in the democratic era, which in turn complicated their leadership context. To illustrate the complexity of that context, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa pointed out a case in which a white leader was using his position to limit the number of black faculty members in his department. He believed the

inability of his higher education institution to attract qualified blacks to faculty positions was compounded by the fact that some white department heads had developed sophisticated measures to keep qualified blacks from appearing at job interviews. These department heads would post a position and state some qualifications but disqualify a candidate for lack of specialization in an area other than that stated in the advertisement. Langa stated,

> I have discovered and corrected certain issues in one of the departments, where a particular head of department would say, "This applicant does not fit exactly in this particular field." In other words, while they were looking for a senior lecturer, they would specify a main field that was not even contained in the advert, to say we actually required that, and when you listened to this, you found that the person who had applied in that particular department was disqualified. I found out that a person with a doctorate, a black guy with a doctorate, had applied and was not short-listed because he was considered not to have expertise in a particular area. What we did, after we discussed this thoroughly with this [department of head] in vain, was to get the union and the SRC [student representative council] involved. Then I said to the Rectorate [senior leadership committee], "Because I am not an expert in that particular field, I will then take all the applicants to an expert in an institution of a similar level and ask that expert to short-list them." I did that. That particular head of school from another institution short-listed that candidate who was not short-listed by this head of department. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Langa, who had worked in historically black institutions for more than a decade, could not find any other justification for this head of department's actions except race. In his experience as a faculty member working under white leaders during the apartheid era, race was used to exclude blacks because it was an official state policy to discriminate against and oppress black people in all spheres of their lives. Thus, it was natural for him to be vigilant when such atrocities were revived in more sophisticated fashions.

It is important to reemphasize that race shaped the experience of both black and white leaders in this study, and hence influenced their construction of the meaning of leadership. Dean Ackerman and Registrar Van Wyk complained about the threat that race presented to their positions in post-apartheid South Africa. Van Wyk, an opponent

of apartheid, thought that affirmative action and equity policies made white leaders feel unappreciated and not needed in the post-apartheid South African higher education sector. He indicated:

> Where it bothers me, white males are endangered. There is pressure to transform, and competition [for] leadership. I'm beginning with my arms [tied behind] my back. My position is [threatened] by the . . . considerations of race and gender and employment equity policies. It is a necessary process, but there are losers in the process. (Van Wyk, personal interview, May 2002)

Other white respondents also believed that their positions of leadership were threatened by equity policies. Dean Ackerman painted a gloomy picture for white leaders working at black higher education institutions: "Certainly it does not make it any easier, and I am not sure if it makes it particularly more difficult. There is a general feeling that people like me are not needed here. (Ackerman, personal interview, May 2002).

To these white leaders, the current equity programs constituted reverse racism. Although they acknowledged the necessity of such programs, they also complained that white leaders were likely to be losers in the process. Race continued to affect Registrar Van Wyk adversely, despite his opposition to apartheid and personal sacrifices he had made in risking government sanctions that might have cost him his life. He reflected, "When I was a regional director for IFSA (Institute for a Free South Africa], I faced death threats. My colleague was murdered by security. I was active in seeing change come about" (Van Wyk, personal interview, May 2002).

Van Wyk seemed to be a victim of the very policies against which he had fought. Such experiences make the whole transformation debate especially complex as the country is dealing with how best the playing field can be leveled. Contesting interests exacerbate the race issue. The black majority, with their political power, want to change

the faces that dominate higher education leadership positions, to reflect the country's demographics.

Equity policies have been under attack from those who are adversely affected by them and also have made some people who are benefiting from those policies uncomfortable. On the other hand, the race issue should be discussed with the understanding that black people suffered major humiliations under apartheid, and there cannot be any decent treatment of this social ill without first acknowledging its history. Vice-Chancellor Charlie, a white senior leader at a historically white institution, witnessed the apartheid policies and was adversely affected by them because they conflicted with his principles. He cited instances in which he had witnessed the dehumanization of blacks by white South Africans:

> One of the first incidents that impacted me was when I was about 23 years old. I was living in Pretoria, and I was sitting in my apartment and looking down. There was a black man coming down Church Street with a bicycle, and a white man in a car was driving on the wrong side of the road. He knocked the black over and then got out of his car and started kicking and punishing the black man, who had done nothing wrong other than being black. Everybody just looked at this as if it was a normal scene, and I intervened. I almost lost my life in that incident. There were many incidents of that kind that were violent. It was abuse-of-people scenes, just giving them hidings [beatings]. The Immorality Act [of 1957] was something that I really dislike [about] the history of this country. The act itself was immoral, so many white people's lives were being destroyed by that act. At the same time, it must have been an extremely humiliating experience for the black and colored people of this country. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

This history underlies the kinds of issues with which leaders at higher education institutions must grapple. The legacy of apartheid has left deep scars and hurt both blacks and whites; thus, they cannot easily forget the impact of race on their lives.

Although some white and black higher education leaders had been adversely affected by racial policies, some white senior leaders benefited from apartheid. Race issues were real to these higher education leaders, and they had to deal with those issues

when they encountered them in transforming patterns of access to and delivery of higher education opportunities to all, irrespective of race. These experiences of South African higher education leaders had led them to commit themselves to issues of social justice. They worked hard to generate diverse student populations who lived in and shared the same spaces with students of other races. To some of these leaders, race had intensified their commitment to the creation of a color-blind society; this ideal kept them striving to oppose discriminatory practices and greatly influenced their construction of the meaning of leadership. Race together with education and training proved to be leading factors that influenced how leaders construct meaning.

Education and Training

To a large extent, the respondents acknowledged that education and training had played a major role in shaping their construction of the meaning of leadership. The education and training they referred to ranged from having leadership roles in formal classroom settings to serving as prefects, head boys or head girls, or leaders of a cultural club. In some instances, opportunities for leadership came through organized social clubs or student organizations in which these leaders had been elected or nominated to serve. Education and training also included formal class activities that constituted part of their preparation for a degree or diploma, or short skills courses designed to prepare future leaders. The influence of education and training on these leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership is discussed under the following headings: (a) school and college experiences, (b) influence of professors, (c) education and training for the job, (d) on-the-job training, and (e) continuing education.

School and college experiences. School and college experiences are discussed according to two themes: experiences that emanated from the school context and those

that were a result of the students' engagement with significant others in the classroom environment and in extracurricular activities. Almost all of the respondents mentioned their school environments as good nurturing grounds. Formal schooling also offered opportunities for leadership in a complex and controlled environment. The leadership experiences of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi and Deans Wellington and De Beers are examples of early exposure to leadership that had helped to shape these individuals' construction of the meaning of leadership.

Makhenkesi, a black vice-principal at a historically black institution, grew up in rural villages of the Eastern Cape, often regarded as amongst the province with the highest poverty rate in South Africa. He argued that school played an important role in preparing him as a leader:

> At school I led as a prefect and [in] school debates. My mother looked to me to assist my siblings. I was always interested in helping others. I exercised leadership in the public service commission, and at church I came up as a leader. I have been . . . pushed by people into leadership positions. In 1989 I joined the university as a senior lecturer. I led as chairperson on boards, for example, the [Magwa] training Trust. I have been a deputy chair of [Zenzele], looking at development. I have displayed my leadership by loving people and doing the best I could for people. (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002)

The preceding passage indicates how school leadership opportunities helped set this individual on his leadership path. The early progression to leadership presumably helped boost this leader's belief in his capabilities and strengthened some of his values, especially that of being of service to others.

De Beers was exposed to leadership opportunities during his high school days and at the university. He shared the following leadership experiences and influences:

> I was head prefect at school, came to [Midland University] to be a priest, and took three majors, biblical studies, systematic theology, and philosophy. I won a scholarship to study philosophy. I got a master's there [and then] got a job at [Midland] University. I worked under tremendous professors. I have been a professor for 10 years, [and have] produced professors. As a student I was a

president of the Student Representative Council at [Midland] University. (De Beers, personal interview, May 2002)

The preceding experiences illustrate some of the divergent routes that leaders followed before assuming their current positions. These routes, in turn, influenced how they learned about leadership and prepared to become leaders. These school experiences exposed the leaders to a number of individuals and events that affected their views about the essence of leadership.

More than half of the respondents, at some stage in their education, pursued graduate studies at an overseas university. As they stated in the interviews, this foreign education and training influenced their lives in many ways. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo said his experience at a prestigious institution in the United States had transformed his views about leadership. When asked what, in particular, had influenced those views, he cited the university environment as a major influence on his construction of the meaning of leadership because of the values that faculty at that institution portrayed. He cited "the ability of my professors at [the university of Midwest] to be human, in the sense that titles in South Africa are very important. When I got [to the university of Midwest], the notion of a title was done away with. It made academic leaders more accessible" (Tambo, personal interview, May 2002).

This transformation in Tambo's meaning of leadership illustrates the influence that college education and training in other cultures can exert. In this sample, college experience was cited as a major contributor to how leaders had come to hold certain beliefs about leadership. To Tambo, leadership was not about power and authority but was more about caring, nurturing somewhat, and forming meaningful relationships with co-workers. These ideas of leadership portrayed a dramatic divergence from apartheid's authoritarian leadership style, with its emphasis on titles.

When asked about his leadership beliefs, Vice-Chancellor Coax, a leader at a historically white university, alluded to the role played by his college experiences in constructing his meaning of leadership:

> I think, obviously, my time as a Rhodes scholar at [Bridge Stone University] had a major influence on my career. It opened my eyes hugely. Getting an opportunity to go to do my Ph.D. in a structured place like [Bridge Stone University], [and being] exposed to so many international people [at an institution] that was obviously a top international university, had a major impact on me and where I wanted to go. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

The preceding account indicates the influence of international college experiences on the leaders and how these experiences shaped their values regarding leadership and career choices. Coax had been exposed to a different culture in which professors gave students greater responsibility for their own learning and achievement. That is why he strongly believed in mentoring others and rejoicing in the success of his students.

The influences of foreign education and training also were evident in other leaders who had the opportunity to study abroad. It is no coincidence that Vice-Chancellor Charlie, who was a strong believer in cooperative education, cited international college experiences as a valuable influence on his leadership:

> I went to the University of [Bavaria], which has a very highly noted school of engineering, the biggest one in Germany. . . . It has a cooperative education program, which means that students spend some time in industry. I never thought that would impact on my activities until much later in my career. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

School and college experiences made a lasting impression on the leaders in this study. These leaders shared school and college experiences that had special meaning for them. Significant college experiences in most cases were closely tied to the individuals' current construction and understanding of the meaning of leadership. From the excerpts presented in this section, it can be seen that these school and college experiences were important to the leaders because they transformed the individuals' life views and

broadened their understanding by presenting different ways of thinking or doing things. In sum, these leaders learned that positions or titles were not substitutes for leadership. Further, they learned that students should be respected and encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. Also, foreign education and training broadened the leaders' views of leadership, enabling them to appreciate liberating forms of leadership.

Influence of professors. Professors at higher education institutions had a major influence on the respondents' construction of the meaning of leadership. A number of respondents who had meaningful academic relationships with their professors confirmed the impact of these relationships on how they currently understood leadership. Vice-Chancellor Coax and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo revealed how the leadership styles of their supervisors or major professors had influenced them. Coax, a distinguished scientist who had earned his Ph.D. at a British university, told how a major professor had made an impact on his life:

> I was very lucky; I had an outstanding supervisor at [Bridge Stone University], and he had a major influence on my career. I think I was very lucky to have him as a person; Professor [McMillan] and I had a very good relationship. I still see him regularly whenever I go to [Bridge Stone]. He has become a great friend of mine. He certainly has had a major influence on my life. He ensured that I did other things. I remember when I arrived at [Bridge Stone University]; he said to me, "Look [Coax], you're a bloody colonial, so you will only be in England for about three years. I expect you not only to get your doctorate but to investigate other things." He knew that I was a keen sports man, and he said to me, "I do not mind what you do over the next three years. Do not come and cry on my shoulder in three years' time when you have no results." (Coax, personal interview, June 2002)

Coax believed that the kind of leadership exemplified by his supervisor gave him an opportunity to exercise freedom and responsibility for his own success. Coax's belief in ensuring that his own students succeeded seemed to stem from his experiences with this supervisor. He had been given the freedom to do the things he liked and was given the responsibility of working hard to meet the demands of his program.

The influence of professors on Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo led to a drastic change in this construction of the meaning of leadership. Tambo was educated in South African black institutions, did postgraduate work through distance education, and later attended an American university for his master's and doctoral studies. He believed that his notion of leadership evolved because his professors presented a completely different attitude about leadership and how they related to students:

> I had to make a tremendous shift in terms of distancing myself from very rigid role models of leadership that I perhaps subconsciously emulated. When I look at my professors whom I regarded as efficient, very, very great academic leaders, [I recall] their ability to step back and allow students to voice their opinions. That, to me, was the first shift I had from the all-knowing type of person. (Tambo, personal interview, May 2002)

Tambo confessed that his notions about leadership were totally transformed while he was a student at a prestigious American university. His professors' modeling of leadership challenged his rigid, position-based, authoritarian notions of leadership and portrayed a more egalitarian and collegial leadership style.

In sum, then, professors played an instrumental role in influencing how some leaders in this study constructed their own beliefs about what leadership is or should be. In most instances, the influence was exerted through leading by example, by showing the kinds of behaviors they would like to see in their students, or creating an environment in which students could learn from the professors' actions. Although four respondents shared these kinds of insights about leadership, the two excerpts quoted above typify the experiences that were significant to a majority of respondents who had studied abroad.

A factor making it more difficult to understand the influence of professors' on students' ideas is that not all students form significant relationships with their professors or supervisors. Because knowledge is constructed, diverse people pick up different messages from the same event. From the preceding narratives, though, it can be seen that

several leaders had perspective-changing experiences that significantly influenced their construction of the meaning of leadership.

Education and training for the job. In this study, education and training for the job encompassed myriad experiences related to the respondents' work that had a direct or an indirect influence on their views or beliefs about leadership. Most of the respondents believed that the education and training in their profession was a major contributor to their construction of what leadership is and should be. Although the participants had followed diverse routes to the leadership positions they currently held, it was evident that their professional preparation comprised multiple opportunities presented to them by people and events in their lives.

Because of the diverse experiences respondents had in the various professional routes they had followed, it was challenging to understand how they constructed the meaning of leadership. Dean Wellington, for example, had been a department head for five years before becoming a dean. His professional career path portrayed the diverse types of experiences some individuals bring to leadership positions.

> I did my national service [military training given to white males during the apartheid government] in 1973, then had an interest in education . . . I taught Xhosa in an adult education program. I spent six years teaching until a post of school counselor was created . . . In 1985 I qualified as a clinical psychologist. In 1986, I applied for a post in education as a lecturer. In 1987 I did my internship and registered as a psychologist and started a private practice in psychotherapy. I taught for eight years, then decided in 1991 to do a doctorate in two and a half years. I later became the deputy director. In 1995, I took over as head of the department for five years, and in 2000 I was elected dean of faculty. (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002)

In terms of preparation for the job, it can be noted that both academic and professional experiences affected how leaders constructed their meaning of leadership. The focus of this discussion is on professional experiences. In Wellington's case, experiences with military-style leadership from his national service years, an egalitarian

university leadership style, exposure to the traditional African values and culture of the Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape as a white English male, his professional training as a psychologist, and his preparation as a teacher all had different effects on his construction of the meaning of leadership. These professional experiences were influences that were prevalent only in a South African context.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, a black vice-principal at a historically white institution, grew up in Gauteng province and earned his junior degree at a black university. He re-told his unique and interesting professional route to leadership:

> I first started at a high school in [Polokwane]. . . . I was then teaching languages at the matric level. Then after about two years, I was promoted to head of the department of languages, and then I joined [Malan] High School. I was one of the founding members of the school and the only [black] who held a senior position as head of department. I did a bachelor of education and was recruited by the university of [Oasis]; I was the first black to join the faculty of education. Oasis University was very challenging because of the history of Oasis. I was recruited to become a researcher for the [National Research Organization], and then I was the first black to work there [in] a highly white-male, Afrikaner, [conservative] environment. When you get to such an environment, your whole person is at stake because those institutions were always suspect. . . . I think all those things had an impact on me, on what type of leadership I would want to see occur. (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002)

Wellington's and Tambo's narratives provide insight into how the professional routes of these two leaders who lived divergent segregated lives during the apartheid days presented different struggles. These leaders' careers portrayed the separate and unequal professional routes that shaped their notions about leadership. Their round-about routes to leadership positions were unique in many ways. These unconventional routes to leadership broke the stereotypical progression to leadership positions that were prevalent in South Africa at the time. They did not work in monocultural environments, which was the norm in the days of apartheid. Both leaders had the experience of serving different

racial groups as teachers in the old apartheid context, which was not easy because of racial laws designed to prevent this from happening.

These abnormal career paths in the old South African sense also present a challenge to understanding how environmental variables intervened in each case when it came to constructing the meaning of leadership. In Tambo's case, his career path seemed to have prepared him to strive for excellence in diversity, as indicated in his account of what leadership meant to him in relation to issues of empowerment. He also strongly believed that his preparation for teaching had fostered his beliefs about caring and nurturing others. Wellington's belief in service and his courage to commit to a larger calling were strong influences on his preparation as a teacher and as a psychologist. His professional choices—teaching and psychology—evidenced a commitment to serving his fellow human beings.

These two respondents' career paths indicate that education and training for leadership is a process that takes place in many arenas and that different influences produce leaders who hold different values. Many respondents mentioned the influence of their education and training on the formation of their values regarding leadership. Vice-Chancellor Charlie's education and training at an overseas graduate school had influenced his leadership philosophy. He explained:

> [I was] appointed at the NRI [National Research Institute] as a research physicist in 1964, through an association with a friend at the NRI. I went to the university of [Bavaria], which has a highly noted school of engineering, the largest one in Germany. There are two things that I think I should mention at the University of [Bavaria]. It has a cooperative education program, which means that students spend some time in industry. I never thought that would impact on my activities until much later in my career. The other thing it had [was] a student village; perhaps [the impact of] that will become clear as we go along. (Charlie, personal interview, June 2002)

Charlie's experiences indicate the theme of preparing for the job. There are divergent preparatory routes for leadership, and most leaders thought their educational experiences were relevant to their leadership roles later in life. The account provided by Charlie indicates that construction of meaning is a process whereby a collection of experiences emerging from one's collective training and educational preparation for his or her profession translate into important sources for meaning-making that can later inform the practice of leadership. Charlie's exposure to a cooperative education system and a student village helped him rally people at his institution around his vision because he was presenting concepts that he was knowledgeable about and believed passionately in as important themes for his leadership.

On-the-job training. On-the-job training is another aspect that is worth exploring and contrasting with training for the job. This theme emerged as an important influence on construction of the meaning of leadership in this study. Deputy Vice-Chancellors Langa and Makhenkesi, Vice-Chancellors Charlie and Coax, Deans Walesa and Ackerman, and Registrars Fourie and Charra cited on-the-job education and as an influence on their construction of what leadership meant to them.

Coax told how on-the-job training had prepared him for his current position as leader of a historically white colonial institution:

> You can see from my career that I have spent my lifetime in universities, so that obviously influences me, the various institutions I have been in. I was particularly influenced by my eight years as a deputy vice-chancellor under the leadership of [Peter Bishop], who was a vice-chancellor at [City Campus] during that time. I learned, I think, a huge amount from him . . .He had a major influence on me. Those eight years or so as a deputy vice-chancellor was crucial. I had the opportunity to observe and learn with regard to running a university, so that was crucial. Also, I had the experience of being head of department for many years. I ran ...biology there for 12 years and 8 years at [City Campus] before becoming a deputy [vice-chancellor]. I have had leadership roles that obviously helped me both as head of department and deputy vice-chancellor at universities. I have

> learned how universities operate and how to get the best out of other people. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Coax's commitment to collegial and egalitarian values seemed to be a product of his having been mentored and his experiences as a faculty member, then head of department, and later a senior leader. Higher education institutions seem to concentrate on people-centered modes of development, which often have been cited as having an influence on leaders' commitment to mentoring others. To a large extent, those who benefited from mentorship in their work environments were humbled by those experiences and in turn empowered those with whom they worked.

Dean Ackerman, a white male working at a historically black higher education institution located in a black urban area, had vast experience in the business world as well as the academic milieu. He alluded to the effect such experience had had on his leadership training, which had influenced his construction of the meaning of leadership:

> I learnt a lot about leadership roles, perhaps some management which has some compliment of leadership. Also, in my municipal career I was a city engineer, two-level authorities. In [Mandela Metro pole] I had a staff of about 600 employees, so I was involved in engineering and was also doing some leadership. I worked with a very good town clerk. I learned how to direct meetings and learned how to lead discussions with trainees. This training gave me a lot of experience.

Even though Ackerman's experiences were in a nonacademic environment, he believed that having a good mentor had been a major influence on his leadership. This was also the case with Vice-Chancellor Coax, who gained similar leadership experience in an academic environment. Mentors in leaders' jobs were instrumental in enhancing self-confidence about their leadership abilities. Ackerman's mentor had been a town clerk when he was working as an engineer for the [Mandela Metro pole] in the Eastern Cape. This mentoring experience shaped his views about leadership through the skills and values he gained on the job.

Some leaders' on-the-job education and training experiences had instilled in them a strong sense of values and belief in their abilities to lead; this, in turn, shaped their construction of the meaning of leadership. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi's interview responses suggested that self-efficacy, especially when it resulted from on-the-job training, was an important factor in constructing the meaning of leadership:

> I have experienced leadership at three levels [faculty leader, middle-level administrative leader, and executive leader]. I have gone through leadership at the top level; I can make final decisions on things. I spent most of my time leading the institution, and that has been very fulfilling for me. (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002)

In sum, the data from this study suggest that on-the-job education and training fostered the respondents' beliefs in the skills they possessed, facilitated mastery of the skills they needed to be successful leaders, and instilled the values they needed to be respected leaders in their professions. It can be argued that on-the-job education and training experiences served as a major socialization influence on how leaders constructed their meaning of leadership.

Although leaders in this study were trained in different professions, the majority of them had considerable experience in higher education institutions before assuming their current jobs. Most of the values regarding democratic practices, serving humanity, and leading by example were solidified through their formal education and professional experience. The leaders' on-the-job training experiences help explain why the majority of respondents believed in mentoring others as a form of service to humanity, which in turn defined what leadership meant to them, as discussed in Chapter 4. From this premise, it can be argued that professional experiences have a major influence on leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. The influence is exerted by both education

and training for the job and on-the-job training experiences, which are value-laden because participants bring to those experiences their own values, as well.

Continuing education. Continuing education includes keeping abreast of developments in higher education management and leadership through reading, attending short skill-oriented courses voluntarily or at the employer's behest, and participating in specially designed skill-development programs on a part-time basis. These courses might be aimed at enhancing leaders' sense of effectiveness or be geared toward preparing them for leadership roles in other institutions. The data suggested that these professional experiences had a considerable influence on some participants' construction of the meaning of leadership.

Registrars Charra and Van Wyk and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa testified to such influences. These leaders valued their continuing education experiences and contended that they had a profound influence on their philosophies of leadership. These experiences also helped to develop their sense of worth as leaders and to reorient their beliefs about leadership. Charra and Langa, both of whom were black leaders at historically black institutions, had earned graduate degrees in business management as part of their continuing education. This gave them skills that were geared to enhancing their management and leadership skills. Their education and training helped them better understand the dynamics of leading in an ever-changing environment fraught with challenges faced particularly by leaders in higher education institutions in South Africa. Such challenges include meeting National Qualifications Authority standards for quality, developing programs that respond to the market, and addressing diversity and equity issues. When asked to share his ideas on what influenced his construction of the meaning of leadership, Charra said, "I think it's reading [continuing education]. I got an MBA

qualification, and it certainly has helped me tremendously" (Charra, personal interview, May 2002). He believed that continuing education, coupled with other professional exposure, had helped prepare him to deal with leadership challenges.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa also had spent most of his professional life as a faculty member and an administrator in residence life at a historically black institution; at the time of the study, he was a vice-chancellor at another historically black higher education institution. He referred to how continuing education experiences had helped to shape his leadership. When he was asked to relate influences on his thinking about leadership and why off-the-job training became a necessity for him, he stated that his new position required him to deal with many issues that were new to him:

> [After] my first immediate look at [my new job], I could see that I did not possess the necessary skills to deal with those issues. I immediately enrolled for an MBA with the business school of [Austria]. They normally have Saturday classes in East London, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and so on. Therefore, I enrolled toward the end of 1998, when I realized that there was quite a lot that I needed to do. . . . The business school in [Austria] is actually doing what they call the action research method. In other words, you undertake projects that deal with what you do in your everyday business at work. You base your project on that and support how you can solve it better in the future, or you propose certain alternatives. So action research involves something like that. In other words, [one is] involved in a particular experience, an experience that, after you reflect on your experience, you look at the theory, look at your experience, [and determine] is it something general, is it something that has been studied elsewhere? (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Langa's use of continuing education to enhance his skills and abilities coincided with Dean Charra's route in continuing education. They both were African leaders, working at historically black institutions. Both believed that having an MBA degree enhanced their self-efficacy as leaders of historically black institutions in the post-1994 era. It is interesting that their own contexts seemed to have a major influence on their present construction of the meaning of leadership. They came from similar backgrounds and had worked at similar institutions for lengthy periods, which seemed to have driven

them to seek continuing education to enhance their leadership. A considerable number of their fellow sample members who had benefited from continuing education experiences cited reading books as one influence; others mentioned short skills courses they had taken.

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, an experienced white male administrator, acknowledged that he had assumed a leadership position at his present institution without any management experience. He discussed his lack of preparation for the current leadership position as follows:

> I must tell you I have not had even one day of education in management. I have zero education in management. I am a physicist, and I guess I will be till the end of my days. But I did do a couple of things when I was appointed. I took the best textbook on management—Henry Mintzberg's *The Nature of Managerial Work.* I then read a book by Tom Peters; the title is *In Search of Excellence.* By and large, I manage by the "seat of my pants." I look at problems when they arise. I am objective; I think that is one thing that is the cornerstone of my managerial success. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

Charlie's experience is unlike that of many of his counterparts in this study, who cited education and training as having had a major influence on their construction of the meaning of leadership. Although Charlie admitted he lacked leadership training, he also acknowledged that his educational experiences had prepared him well for his current position. He had learned about the concept of a student village in Bavaria and later introduced it at his institution as a residence model that reinforced his values concerning racial integration. He brought black students who had been asked to live off campus back to a multiracial student residence that he was promoting on the campus.

In summary, the respondents' education and training for the job, which involved exposure to diverse leadership literature and various leadership styles exhibited by professors, played an important role in shaping their ideas about leadership. On-the-job experiences also instilled positive values that transformed the leaders' conception of

leadership and enhanced their self-confidence about their abilities as leaders. Continuing education and off-the-job experiences were also important influences, especially for black senior leaders who continued to work at black higher education institutions. To them, continuing education complemented their education and training prepared them for the challenges they faced at their respective institutions.

Religion and Politics

Religion and politics emerged as spheres of life that had a formidable influence on respondents' construction of the meaning and practice of leadership. For these leaders, religion and politics influenced their core values, especially in determining what was fair and just. The themes of religion and politics emerged from these leaders' stories as interrelated sources of influence. They constituted the fabric of the leaders' lives. In many instances, both proponents and opponents of apartheid used religion and politics to support their ideals.

The respondents' leadership was largely modeled by religious and political personalities who were prominent advocates of human rights and fought to dismantle the oppressive apartheid state. On the other hand, the apartheid state used or borrowed religious ideologies to support its propaganda and to justify the practice of apartheid. Vice-Chancellor Charlie mentioned the aggressive indoctrination common among white South Africans during the apartheid era:

> As a child and having grown up in South Africa, one noticed that people were not given the dignity and respect as a person. Coming from an underprivileged and a Christian background, one can reinforce the good and the bad. At the age of 13, I had apartheid [theologies] preached to me. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

Charlie's exposure to apartheid religious foundations transformed him into a strong advocate for such political ideals as respect for human rights and equal treatment of

people of other races. These ideals were prevalent in his leadership philosophy: "At all times, I will respect the rights and the dignity of other people" (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002). Some leaders who worked with Charlie now shared these values and motto.

Although the apartheid government and its supporters used religion to further its ideologies or to sustain its political ideals, the state did not interfere with individual choices to worship. This attitude toward religion made places of worship safer places for anti-apartheid political activists or religious leaders to preach under the guise of the scriptures. To a number of senior leaders such as Vice-Chancellor Charlie; Deputy Vice-Chancellors Makhenkesi, Langa, and Tambo; Registrar Van Wyk; and Deans Wellington and Ackerman, religion and politics served as education and training grounds for leadership. The church provided a strong foundation for leadership, defining values such as trust, integrity, strong moral purpose to serve others, and commitment to social justice issues.

Historically, African, Christian, and Muslim religions were established in specific racial communities in South Africa, and the country remains multi-religious. Different religions and their influence on the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership are explored in the following discussion.

Deputy Vice-Chancellors Langa, Makhenkesi, and Tambo adhered to African religious beliefs. The African belief system encourages people to practice such traditions as making sacrifices and remembering ancestors. These practices provide a way for Africans to define what is significant in their own lives; they also inculcate a spirit of humanism. The notion of humanism is best expressed in a Xhosa proverb, "Umntu ngumntu ngabantu," which can be translated, "You owe your being to others." This

means that it is through others that one is confirmed as a human being. This humanistic belief of leadership was an influence on how Langa had come to construct his notion of shared leadership. He cited the home culture as a basis for his beliefs:

> If one looks at how the African child grew up in a rural area, you find out that the elderly would discuss certain things with their grandchildren, children, and so on. Some of these [stories] were what they call [fairy tales], but most of them were educational in principle. Some of these were such that they would sort of give you advice so that, in the end, you would consider other people. That is why, in the past, we did not have things like street children because the families used to sort of take care of everybody. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

The preceding quotation shows the direct influence of African traditional and religious values on some leaders in this study. There is evidence that some African religious values or community beliefs continued to shape leaders' construction of their meaning of leadership. The belief system espoused by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa is an indication of such values: "When you grow up, you always make sure that if you are having something, your wish is that [all] your brothers and sisters may rejoice with you, like sharing with you. In other words, we [Africans] have that sense of sharing" (Langa, personal interview, June 2002). These humanistic belief systems, especially the concept of sharing, are not limited to African religious beliefs, but are shared by Christianity and Islam as well.

The commonalities in philosophies and the pressure from the church for people to convert to Christianity in order to access formal schooling forced a number of leaders to subscribe to dual religious systems. Deputy Vice-Chancellors Langa, Makenkhesi, and Tambo are examples of adherents to religious dualism as they espoused Christian religious beliefs as well as African traditional values. A Christian religion was influential in Langa's construction of the meaning of leadership:

> I will say the first issue of my value system [is] the truth; my father had an impact on that. My father was a preacher at the Methodist Church, so he always was

> making sure that whatever the case might be, one has to tell the truth, even if it means you may be punished at a certain stage because of that. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Langa also indicated that his religious background was the foundation of his belief and value system and thus influenced the construction of his concept of leadership.

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, Deans Wellington and Ackerman, and Registrar Van Wyk identified themselves as Christians. Dean Khoi was the only sample member who identified himself as a Muslim. When asked about influences on his leadership, he acknowledged that religion and religious personalities had been significant influences on his leadership. He asserted, "I am a deeply religious person. Look at the life of prophet Mohamed in changing the world" (Khoi, personal interview, May 2002). The prophet Mohamed's values inspire most Muslims to have a consultative approach to leadership and to possess great humility. However, these qualities are not unique to Muslims.

Religion and politics were interwoven entities that played an important role in shaping many leaders' life views or belief systems. The influence provided by the grandparents' and parents' religious system initially shaped the respondents' values and played a significant role in the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. The social context, which was politically charged, also played a significant role in shaping these leaders' views.

The majority of respondents constructed their meaning of leadership within the parameters of their social, cultural, religious, and political environments. Serving in various political and religious organizations provided leadership education and training for these individuals. Leaders who talked openly about the influence of religion and politics on their leadership development were Vice-Chancellor Charlie; Deputy Vice-

Chancellors Makhenkesi, Tambo, and Langa; Registrar Van Wyk; and Deans Wellington and Ackerman. Each leader cited one or both of these major spheres of influence.

Van Wyk and Tambo are examples of leaders in whose lives religion and politics were interrelated spheres of influence. After leaving school early to work as an apprentice electrician, Van Wyk worked as a youth leader at his church, and later served as a minister for 19 years. Thus, a large part of his adult life had been influenced by his involvement in the church. His religious values were evident when he was asked to reflect on influences on his leadership. He said:

> The church setting had an influence. [It was based on] volunteerism. You need to take people with you [involve people], and this brought emphasis on integrity. You do not make decisions for expediency. Decisions have to be fair and just and morally correct. (Van Wyk, personal interview, May 2002)

Van Wyk's religious experiences helped shape his zeal to challenge the apartheid on moral grounds for what it stood for. His religious beliefs propelled him to join political forces with antiapartheid movements. From being a minister he went to work at the Institute for Democratic Alternatives for South Africa (IDASA), an anti-apartheid political organization responsible for coordinating activities to bring about equality and democracy in South Africa.

Working for IDASA made Van Wyk feel that he was in the forefront of bringing about change in government and apartheid-oriented policies. He stated that he was not a typical religious or political white leader of his generation: "When I was a regional director for IDASA, I faced death threats [for working for democratic change]. My colleague was murdered by security [police]" (Van Wyk, personal interview, May 2002). The security police were in the business of eliminating all those who were deemed a threat to the state, irrespective of their race.

When asked to reflect on what had influenced his leadership, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo cited politics as the major influence. He had been a political activist during his student days and had been forced to change universities several times in order to finish his undergraduate education. His political activism was cultivated particularly at two black campuses that served as centers of political activity in South Africa, Fort Hare and the University of the North, also known as Turfloop. These schools produced a large number of prominent political and religious leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Frank Chikane, Cyril Ramaphosa, Makhenkesi Stofile, Govan Mbeki, Oliver Tambo, Chris Hani, and Mgopuste Tiro. According to Tambo, his political experience served as a catalyst for his commitment to excellence:

> It was my political inclinations from my [college and university] days, to my [Rock University] days, when we were strongly influenced by the black-consciousness movement, and from there it was SASO [South African Student Organization], that really made us focus on beating the system at its own game. I think it was this type of focus on making it that shaped my leadership style. (Tambo, personal interview, May 2002)

Further, Tambo acknowledged coming from a religious family background, suggesting that religion and family tradition also contributed to his value system as a leader. He stated, "My own background, my grandparents were ministers. I am from a background of teachers, ministers, nurses. . . . I was brought up in a highly religious background; we have to call it Christian" (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002).

In sum, we can begin to understand how religion and politics influenced the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. From the respondents' accounts, religion and politics are cited interrelated spheres of influence on this meaning-making. These spheres of influence provided contexts in which leaders could acquire value systems that were people centered. These value systems comprised high moral standards, compassion, passion for service, commitment to excellence, and advocacy for social

justice. Even those leaders who had been steeped in apartheid theology became staunch critics of apartheid policies; some were even prepared to risk their lives to bring about change.

Family

Family and home background was another theme that emerged in the data analysis concerning major factors that influenced respondents' construction of the meaning of leadership. For a majority of the respondents, early family influences played a major role in shaping their beliefs and values. These experiences included the leaders' relationships with their parents, grandparents, siblings, and other people who influenced the leaders' life views.

In exploring family influences, it became clear that relationships were paramount in defining whose values the leaders were prepared to adopt as their own. Humble beginnings and family values were cited as having affected how these leaders formed their philosophies of life and continued to influence the leaders' thoughts about leadership over time.

Humble beginnings. In the following discussion, humble beginnings denote poor backgrounds in terms of financial resources. Few leaders mentioned their family background unless I probed for it. Even then, few references were made to affluence or lack of it. Some of the participants came from underprivileged families, and their childhood years were full of struggles that were followed by success. Many of the respondents seemed to have transformed these struggles into sources of courage for them to succeed. These experiences played a major part in shaping the leaders' present lives and their belief systems.

To Registrar Charra, Vice-Chancellor Charlie, and Deputy Vice-Chancellors Makhenkesi and Langa, having humble beginnings meant being different from their peers and having worked hard to define life in their own terms. In most instances, education was the vehicle they used to advance their prospects of social mobility. Charlie, a white Afrikaner, spoke of the impact of his relatively humble beginnings, even though people might have expected him to have been advantaged because of the apartheid government.

> I am an Afrikaner and I went to an Afrikaans school. I think in some way I was a somewhat disadvantaged Afrikaner, if things like that had existed way back in the 1940s. My father was a railway man, so he was not affluent. As apartheid was beginning to be felt strongly within the [country's] economic development, it turned out that most whites who were willing to work at least had a reasonable job. I did not grow up totally poor, but I did not have the best, and I went to not-the-best school at that time in Cape Town. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

Although Charlie acknowledged that he was not totally poor, his remarks do help dispel the stereotype of all white South Africans coming from affluent homes. But within this context, it needs to be acknowledged that disparities exist even among whites, who are often presented in homogeneous terms in major policy discourses in South Africa today.

Charlie was the only white respondent in the sample who openly spoke about his humble beginnings, but his family would be considered disadvantaged only in comparison to others within the white Afrikaner community. His black counterparts were worse off than he was, in accordance with the racial stratification that put white people at the top of the racial and hence economic ladder, followed by coloreds, then Indians, and finally Africans. However, as an Afrikaner, Charlie was poorer than his English-speaking white counterparts because English-speaking whites were the colonizers of South Africa before the apartheid government and therefore had an economic advantage over the Afrikaners.

In the South African context, access to higher education generally has been tied to economic background. Yet, despite their humble beginnings, many of the respondents in this study gained access to higher education through sponsorship from a variety of sources, such as community organizations, the church, the government, and business organizations.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa, Vice-Chancellors Coax and Charlie, and Dean Wellington talked about receiving sponsorship at various levels of their education. Langa's sponsorship started at the high school level:

> I got some sponsorship one-way or the other, especially from high school; the committee there sponsored me because my parents were a little bit poor, so normally poor. At [boarding high school] also, the government sponsored me and some of the [other] students. At university, I got what is called the Sir Harry Oppenheimer bursary. That one took me until I completed the three years of my Bachelor of Science degree. Immediately after that I entered the honors degree program; I was sponsored by NRI [National Research Institute]. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Thus, financial aid in the form of bursaries, grants, or scholarships played a major role in enabling these leaders to complete their education. The three natural scientists in this study, Langa, Charlie, and Coax, who have risen to the top two positions of leadership at their institutions, had similar experiences when it came to educational sponsorship.

Charlie's humble beginnings also had a major influence on where he went to school. As a consequence, those school environments influenced his thinking and in turn shaped his leadership philosophy. He noted:

> I went to not-the-best school at that time in [City Town] I was schooled at Mountain Primary School and then I went to [City Town], where I finished my primary schooling at [Underpass] and then went to the Hoer School [Van Rooyen] in [Sugar Town], which was very difficult for my parents because they could not totally afford the fees. I think, back in those days, the fees were much less than they are now, but there were some families that could not afford them. I then went to [City University] simply because I got a bursary to go there. Normally, my peers would have gone to the University of [Botha]. I had grown up near the [City University] and my parents later moved from Underpass to [Commercial

> town]. So it made sense that I had to go to the University of Cape Town from a financial point of view. Otherwise, if I had not got a bursary, I would not have been able to go to university. So I grew up realizing that higher education does not fall in your lap; you have to work for it. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

To these leaders, financial aid made it possible for them to advance in their studies. The rare educational opportunities extended to them instilled strong beliefs in empowering others as they rise to positions of leadership in many spheres of their lives. The activities geared at being of service to others seem to have been prompted by their experiences and the generosity of their communities in providing finances for them to reach their dreams.

Humble beginnings in the lives of Vice-Chancellor Langa and Registrar Charra influenced how they constructed their meaning of leadership, which they saw as dedication to serving humanity. These leaders also, in speaking of the benefits they had gained from their mentors, expressed their commitment to empowering others.

Charra's story indicates the hardships he endured as a child. He grew up poor, having lost his father at an early age. Charra managed to pay for his primary education by working after school. As a leader, Charra was committed to national transformation initiatives in higher education in South Africa. He served as a member of the National Education Transformation Task Force, which was responsible for making recommendations on how the ministry of education could facilitate the development of a coherent, coordinated, and integrated national system. His humble background helped him empathize with students' problems:

> I was born into an Indian family [and] lost my dad at an early age. I worked weekends. There was a shortage of resources. I come from a disadvantaged family. I walked to school. The difficulties and experiences of childhood tend to make you work harder; let you appreciate what you have. My mother ensured that we should have a good education. I am empathetic to student problems; I speak from personal experience. (Charra, personal interview, May 2002)

It is evident from the data that these leaders' humble beginning served to foster their empathy and caring for others. Some of the respondents said specifically that their humble beginnings largely influenced how they constructed leadership values that espoused social justice. In sum, the greatest lesson learned from the interview responses was that humble beginnings produced leaders who were committed to empowering others, serving others, and transforming social structures and their agencies for the benefit of all.

Family values. For many respondents, parents played a major role in encouraging them to commit to education and fostered the necessity to strive for excellence in whatever they did. The discussion in this section starts by exploring the influence of parents on the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership.

All of the respondents spent most of their childhood years with their families. Growing up in a good home, as subjectively defined by the respondents, was cited as an important factor that prepared most of them for their current leadership positions. For example, Vice-Chancellor Tambo, a black leader at a higher education institution, who had been a trailblazer in rising to a position of leadership that other blacks had never achieved, claimed that a home background in which education and personal responsibility were emphasized had shaped his success and how he thought about leadership:

> Education was highly valued, and my grandparents and my mother never believed that one could fail. Like in class, you have to be number one, and you have to account why [you did not do well]. We were pushed towards excellence all the time. And also the strength we had, that I will succeed. I had a very good home upbringing. (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002)

Education was prized in Tambo's family, and that prepared him to assume a leadership position and to expect excellence from others. He was not afraid to risk being the first black person in an environment where everyone else was white. This leader had fought

for what he believed in at conferences and other places, which is why many people regarded him as a leader. He credited his supportive home environment with having helped him establish himself as a leader.

A supportive home environment also enhanced these leaders' self-esteem; respondents said they believed that leaders should exhibit self-efficacy. Dean Wellington, a fairly young and bright academician, attributed his personal success to his family values and home environment. He explained the influence of these factors on his construction of the meaning of leadership:

> I have a strong sense of right and wrong stemming from my values. Family has some influence. I grew up in a very secure home that gave me a strong sense of self-esteem. Some of the values are trust, [being fairly secure] in my own sense of self. I do not put others down to get my worth, and I am a builder. I am comfortable and secure. Rather, I was able to think creatively about life and being prepared. [I believe in having] respect for systems and authority, taking responsibility for ourselves. (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002)

Here home environment emerged as an important influence on the leader's values and his sense of who he was and what he believed in. The influence of home environment in the meaning-making process was also apparent in other leaders' stories.

Several respondents indicated that most of their mothers' or fathers' values were transferred to them. This influence of a parent, especially the father, dominated the discussion of influences that could be traced to the family. When I asked Dean Khoi to reflect on how it felt to be a black leader in a historically white institution, he referred to the role his father had played in shaping his views: "I am not scared of white men. I come from a family of 13; my father was a merchant who believed passionately in educating his children. He never pushed us; he gave us independence to make up our minds" (Khoi, personal interview, May 2002).

The preceding quotation illustrates the credit this leader and others in the study gave to their fathers for shaping their lives. Respondents who mentioned home as an influence on their construction of the meaning of leadership often cited their fathers as having affected them the most. A majority of both black and white leaders in this study came from families in which the father had a professional job and the mother was a housewife. Dean Ackerman's background is an example of the influence of having a father who was a professional. His father's profession might have contributed to Ackerman's choice to be a practicing engineer for 22 years.

Vice-Chancellor Coax also discussed the influence of his father's legacy as an educational leader and how that shaped his view of leadership. He noted that his father's career was an exhibition of excellence. He also acknowledged the influence of his family background: "I think my family background influenced me. My father was a schoolmaster, and he died when I was young, 10 years. In my eyes, he was an outstanding schoolmaster and I wanted to excel. I think that influenced me" (Coax, personal interview, May 2002). Here again, the father was an important influence on the respondent's construction of the meaning of leadership. In this case, the father had been an educational leader, and the son was a leader of a higher education institution who was committed to the ideals of integrity and excellence.

Although the majority of these leaders' mothers did not work outside the home, in some cases they were just as influential as the fathers in shaping their sons' construction of the meaning of leadership. Vice-Chancellor Coax and Dean Charra lost their fathers at early ages; hence, their mothers raised the children on their own. Charra attested to his mother's influence after his father died. He said, "My mother ensured that we should have a good education" (Charra, personal interview, May 2002).

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi credited his mother with contributing to his development as a leader from an early age. Her influence had shaped his belief that leadership should be about service:

> I assumed a position of leadership from a very early age. My family, brothers, and peers bestowed leadership on me. At school I led as a prefect and [in] school debates. My mother looked to me to assist my siblings. I was always interested in helping others. I exercised leadership in the public service commission, and at church I came up as a leader. I have been . . . pushed by people into leadership positions. (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002)

In summary, humble beginnings and family values had a considerable influence on the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. Coming from relatively less fortunate families encouraged many of these leaders to construct the meaning of leadership as being of service to humanity. These early influences made them have a passion for activities that empowered their students and colleagues to succeed.

The leaders' families instilled in them a strong sense of moral values that included integrity, trustworthiness, and striving for excellence. Some leaders, like Dean Ackerman and Vice-Chancellor Coax, had been strongly influenced by their fathers' professional careers. Their mothers served different but complementary roles in the leaders' development. Some respondents acknowledged that their mothers had played a supportive and motivational role in making them believe in education and further skills training. Their mothers spent more time rearing and inculcating family values in these leaders during their formative years and continued to create stable home environments from which these leaders benefited immensely.

Gender

Even though I asked leaders specific questions about gender issues at their institutions, it was difficult to generate an honest discussion on this topic. The majority

of respondents were male; to them, gender issues centered on the lack of women leaders in their circles. At the time of the study, the majority of female leaders at South African higher education institutions occupied middle-management positions, such as directors of units. A few were deans, and a handful could be found in the positions of registrar, deputy vice-chancellor, and vice-chancellor.

A female participant in this study and Dean De Beers spoke forthrightly about the effect of gender on their leadership. Other leaders, when asked about gender, found ways of avoiding the subject and talked about race instead or, in one case, gave superficial justification as to why gender was not a major concern at his institution.

The female respondent talked passionately about gender issues and how they had affected her personal definition of leadership. She spoke of what it meant to her to be the first black and also the first woman to break through certain barriers. In her current institution, she was the only woman and person of color in senior leadership. Her struggles and triumphs had been guided by her belief that a woman leader has a nurturing role to play:

> People that I work with—take, for example, my secretary; she is here [and] she is a woman also. I do not look at her as a white woman. The relationship I have with her is a woman-to-woman relationship. You have to know how to pick your battles right now, and you have to understand how men think and the things they might do to you. You have to know when to make a point. Institutions are always male, male dominated, but you also must never forget the fact that you are a woman. You have a nurturing feeling, and whatever I do I must remember not to let this person get out of my office with a bruised ego. (A female respondent, personal interview, 2002)

This woman's construction of the meaning of leadership was shaped largely by the fact that being a woman in a male-dominated institution left her open to a questioning of her abilities and competencies:

> I did not get the job because I was a woman. I was openly appointed; students, the unions, and everybody [used the open-interview forum] to question me. I had

> all the prerequisites. I had the experience. I had the qualifications. [Unfortunately], my appointment coincided with the government equity plan. These institutions had to do something. I wonder if it were not for affirmative action or equity plans, how easy my coming in would have been. I am very disturbed by the fact that people do not say that you got the job but believe that you were let in. . . . You have to deal with this because you are black and a woman. (A female respondent, personal interview, 2002)

This respondent believed that her experiences as a woman and being black had influenced how she constructed her leadership values. Her experiences with gender discrimination and questioning of her capabilities had made her the nurturing, caring, and decisive leader she was. She also defined empowering others, especially women, as the kind of leadership and contribution she could make to her society.

Another respondent who addressed substantive gender issues was Dean De Beers, the senate representative on the council of his university and a participant in the institutional forum on transformation. When asked to discuss gender issues at his institution and how they influenced his construction of the meaning of leadership, he cited complaints, shared with the institutional forum, about the marginalization of women and black staff working at white campuses:

> In the institutional forum, one white female staff member [reported] about her marginalization. [Other issues raised were] differential access and special scholarship at the master's and Ph.D. levels. These issues concern special access for staff, access to policy, and changing demography. (De Beers, personal interview, May 2002)

The preceding account indicates that both gender and race at times deprived women the respect they deserved for ascending to positions of influence. The female respondent thought that some of her colleagues viewed her entry into a senior position in a historically white institution as an affirmative action appointment, notwithstanding the fact that she was well qualified for the job. She thought this occurred because she was a woman and also black.

Some leaders such as Dean Charra, a black male senior leader who had worked at black institutions for more than two decades, spoke of gender issues in terms of monitoring equity plans: "Aspects of equity and transformation of the institution [are to] monitor its students and monitor its staffing. I am a representative looking at these areas. We are working on equity on academic staff, finding ways and means of addressing [it]" (Charra, personal interview, May 2002).

As mentioned earlier, a majority of the leaders in this study avoided discussing the issue of gender in the interviews. Dean Wellington is one of those who answered the questions and the probes on gender issues and their impact on his belief system. This dean, a committed academician who also had won the vice-chancellor's teaching award, tended to downplay the influence of gender on his construction of the meaning of leadership. In his remarks, he portrayed men as being at more of a disadvantage than women because men tend to react differently to other men, whereas women seem to have the ability to charm men:

> I cannot overlook the influences of . . . gender on leadership, including my background and schooling. Women can charm men, to put it bluntly. They are able to create relations with men. Men respond differently to other men than to women. Other social things such as sport create the ability for us to relate to one another. (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002)

Wellington's handling of the question concerning gender issues raised concerns about how seriously he took the challenges faced by women at higher education institutions. Most of the other leaders shied away from talking about this topic or trivialized the lack of gender balance at a particular institution.

Summary

In sum, we do understand that the construction of meaning about leadership in this sample is a complex process; individuals make meaning from their racial, religious,

political, family, and gender contexts. All these experiences seem to have developed a cadre of leaders at South African higher education institutions who share common values about leadership, such as the importance of integrity and modeling of behaviors that support being an exemplary leader. Other values that seem to stem from the influences discussed in this study are using one's leadership to be of service to humanity and also enlisting others to join in seeing the bigger picture of what can be possible, which was described as having a vision.

CHAPTER 6

THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

The perspectives of 11 senior leaders on the practice of leadership at higher education institutions in South Africa are presented in this chapter. I examine a practice of leadership that is governed by values of mutual respect and creation of egalitarian work spaces. This leadership practice, to the selected leaders, was exemplified by shared governance, sharing of information, and respect for each other. These leadership behaviors are examined against the common leadership values of leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision. These leaders' behaviors reflect their leadership values. They performed their craft of leadership in a context or setting that was governed by change at three system levels:

1. An institutional level, where members negotiate with each other in a collaborative setting.

2. A regional level, where institutions with different histories and challenges must learn to collaborate or work together.

3. A national level, where the government enacts laws and facilitates a policy process to achieve the goal of having a lean and efficient system of higher education.

Leadership Behaviors

In this sample, there was overwhelming support for behaviors that exhibited collaboration, facilitation, openness and democracy, selflessness, and advocacy across racial divides and institutional types. The leadership behaviors that sample members espoused represented a state of utopia for which every leader was striving. Their

personal stories tended to portray the above-mentioned values or ideal leadership behaviors that should be universal to higher education leaders who work in their context.

The incumbents believed that their leadership practice was congruent with their values and provided meaning to what they did on a day-to-day basis. Leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision were common understandings identified by the incumbents. These philosophies of leadership were enacted at various sites in divergent ways. In some cases, there were indications that the variations in their leadership behaviors were a result of their political histories that emphasized differentiation based on race and economic affluence. These contextual differences, especially those related to affluence, emerged as a source of tensions at different campuses. The participants in this study indicated that the tension that existed at their sites encouraged them to explore collaborative leadership practices as a way of resolving the artificial divides stemming from apartheid.

Collaboration

The leaders' descriptions of collaborative practices suggested that all members of their campus communities participated as equals in policy- and decision-making processes. Stakeholders were brought to the table to help engineer innovative ways of building partnerships to deal with institutional challenges, especially on such issues as providing greater access, diversity prerogatives, equity plans, curricular transformation, institutional governance, responses to national debates, and many other internal and external challenges. In this leadership practice that encouraged greater participation of stakeholders, senior leaders recognized that post-apartheid higher education challenges were too complex and sensitive for them to handle alone.

Several participants expressed this widely shared commitment to collaborative leadership behaviors. Dean Wellington's views about leadership and its practice provide a glimpse of the collegiality existing at different campuses. He explained the values of transparency, honor, and cooperation that informed his practice of leadership: "Being sincerely who I am, positions do not change my values. I can relate to people. I do not pretend to be wise and have all the answers; together we try to find the truth. I like to embark on joint ventures to find out the truth" (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002).

The collaborative practices that these leaders espoused implied that they valued inclusive decision-making processes and that they called for broad participation through elected representatives. The elected representatives served on committees in order to safeguard the interests and sentiments of all members of the organization.

Listening to these leaders' accounts, it became clear that there were advantages as well as limitations to the collegial leadership context. Most participants believed that collaborative behaviors were preferred over unilateral actions. Sharing activities in their practice had become an important feature of their day-to-day activities. In this study, it was evident that collaborative practices were widely used at these higher education institutions. Leadership values that promoted a spirit of interdependence and broad participation tended to create an environment enabling the emergence of leadership behaviors that supported consultation and respect for others.

Registrar Van Wyk, an advocate for democracy and social justice, argued that the values espoused by his colleagues and institution heavily influenced his practice.

> The nature of the institution dictates your style. A university is a democratic place; [its] leadership [is] by committee. [For example], I run exams; we have two sessions now, [and] I want to have three exam sessions a day. To achieve any change, it has to go through a committee. I believe this is an administrative

> decision. It does not need a committee to decide on. (Van Wyk, personal interview, May 2002)

For this leader, collaborative practices presented a leadership challenge that necessitated distinguishing between policy-making processes, which require broad participation, and administrative decisions, which need to be implemented without steering them through committees. He believed that collaborative processes are time consuming and also hinder decision-making processes in which institutional politics and self-interest prevail over ingenuity. Van Wyk's case indicates that collaborative practices are not a given in the practice of leadership. In some instances, shared values such as using committees to inform the decision-making process might not be compatible with some leaders' preferred modes of leadership. Therefore, the leaders' actions within collaborative environments can be seen as products of countless interactions among the leader, supporters, and their context.

Dean Charra, a change agent, saw his leadership practice as driven by the value of being of service to others, although he said he was collaborative and democratic in his practice of leadership. In reflecting on his practice, he highlighted his accomplishments. In the following excerpt, Charra's use of "I" overshadows the collegial practices he believed in:

> [Others] appreciate the changes that I made in the department and the rules that I prefer. Certainly I have made some substantial changes from the time I had come to the institution, in the academic administration itself and in examination. Those practices [that I implemented] are deeply entrenched as policies of the institution. So before something has to take place it has to be discussed with the stakeholders, then accepted at the highest place, for example the academic board meetings, and they are accepted as policies and practices of the institution. (Charra, personal interview, May 2002)

The preceding quotation on the practice of leadership indicates the complexity of matching one's beliefs with one's practice. In Charra's case, being a change agent forced

him to be an initiator of change that placed a high premium on the individual and then the group. In his case, a collegial environment that encouraged working through committee structures and upholding democratic practice exhibited the challenges of matching one's role as a leader with the operational context.

In the data, cooperative governance emerged as one leadership practice that is acceptable at higher education institutions and was shared by many. Vice-Chancellor Coax, a leader at Midlands University, provided a comprehensive understanding of his leadership by relating it to decision-making processes. He argued that the collaborative nature of leadership that is espoused by many leaders at higher education institutions rules out the possibility of unilateral decisions:

> A university is a very interesting place. It is not a business and has a very flat structure. At [Midland University], in particular, the senate is still a very powerful body because we are so small and the senate is about 70 people. I have to ensure that I keep the confidence of the senate. The university is a very democratic organization, with faculty boards. It operates on a committee structure. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

According to this leader, certain structures promote collaboration between the leader and other stakeholders. The collaborative behaviors of higher education leaders are one of the factors that distinguish higher education institutions from business organizations. The distinguishing factors Coax cited include working in a nonhierarchical structure and using committee structures in a collaborative and consultative fashion. Such leadership behaviors mark a departure from traditional leadership models, which use positional power to be effective and employ directives as means of communication. To leaders in this study, collegial leadership called for behaviors that encouraged teamwork. Leaders tended to shun behaviors that were controlling and not empowering.

In sum, collaboration is one of the preferred leadership behaviors at higher education institutions in South Africa. Leaders who operate in collaborative environments acknowledge the need to respect others as equal partners. They need to provide leadership within a post-1994 legislative framework that promotes cooperative governance. To them, this framework for leadership practice presents a glimpse of the complex nature of leading in a sector that has been undergoing a major change in ethos and practice.

Facilitation

Facilitation as a leadership behavior involves creating and sustaining an environment in which organization members are enabled to engage in collaborative practices, make independent decisions on their operational modes, and receive support for ownership. Leaders in this study described their practice of leadership as enabling others to realize their potential. In most cases, leaders used their collaborative leadership practices to offer opportunities to their colleagues, subordinates, and students as means of validating others as vital partners in shaping the direction and future of their work environments. Participants in collaborative environments enact their leadership by encouraging others to take collective responsibility for achieving organizational goals. The role of a leader, therefore, is to facilitate processes that are geared at building an environment that promotes the common good of the institution.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, an ardent supporter of facilitative leadership, defined leadership as the act of providing a collaborative environment:

> A leader is the facilitator and creator of an environment that works for the organization. He/she makes stakeholders feel that they are assets. Leadership gets everybody on board. Leadership in higher education institutions is to try and bring academics, service workers, and administrative staff to rally around a vision. (Makhenkesi, personal interview, June 2002)

Many participants in this study shared Makhenkesi's understanding of the leader's role as that of an enabler. They saw themselves as agents of transformation, and their role was to provide opportunities for others to contribute effectively in achieving shared goals.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa, a black vice-principal at a historically black higher education institution, was a supporter of the national change initiatives, especially the rationalization of higher education institutions. He indicated the importance of facilitating the proposed restructuring of higher education:

> Look at what is happening. The cabinet [members of the South African president's inner circle or ministers] has already accepted the [minister] of education's proposal about the restructuring of the system of higher education. Ours as leaders is to make sure we participate in that positively. In other words, we contribute positively to that. So even the minister or the council sends someone as a facilitator. It is very important for us to help the system so that it is as smooth a transition as possible. In the end we see it as a benefit to the region in general and the nation in general, because earlier on, as I indicated, some of the institutions were founded mainly on political grounds. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

In this account, Langa redefined the role of leaders at an institutional level. He reiterated the role of leaders as active facilitators of the change process. This identification of leaders as facilitators relates to the notion that they should embrace collaborative behaviors.

Another supporter of facilitation as a necessary leadership behavior was Dean Wellington, who stressed that it is a leader's duty to create an environment in which others can fulfill their callings. According to him, a leader should enable colleagues to find significance in their work:

> My views are expressed in the belief that the calling is bigger than the institution. "The dream is bigger than the banner." Our vision is driven by a deep sense that this faculty exist in order to contribute to the quality of education in this region. The moral imperative is on how can we best do this: delivery of quality education. The vision is our calling; we need to create structures in order to fit that vision. *I would not like to prescribe this* [italics added]. We should look at it as a faculty. (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002)

In this excerpt, Wellington acknowledged that his role as a leader was that of a facilitator. He believed that his enabling function meant finding ways of keeping the vision in sight and also creating an environment enabling faculty to achieve their dream of providing quality education. In this statement he implied that the onus of creating such a milieu is not entirely dependent on the leader, but should be a collaborative activity in which faculty can offer ingenious ways of achieving the school's vision. The participants portrayed openness as a leadership value that defined their engagement with others.

In summary, leaders in this study viewed their practice as facilitative, meaning that in their leadership they recognized the contributions of individual members. As they understood it, leaders were there to ensure that members on their campuses lived up to their potential by providing resources and support to those who needed it. In this context, leaders viewed themselves as using their role as a facilitator to create a collegial context and to be in step with the espoused leadership values: leading by example, being of service to humanity, and providing a vision. These leadership behaviors were described as involving acts in which leaders were prepared to reflect with colleagues on challenges facing them as a collective. The new leadership practices that demonstrated openness and democratic behaviors encouraged different stakeholders to recognize the need for collaboration.

Openness and Democracy

Openness and democracy in this context exemplify one of the core values expressed by incumbents in sharing their understandings of leadership—the recognition that they should lead at the will of the people. Their commitment to service and integrity was the only aspect of their leadership that could be negotiated. They had to facilitate frank and honest discussions among stakeholders.

Openness and democracy led to leadership behaviors of accepting and embracing others as important contributors. These practices also committed the leaders to practice integrative modes of leadership. Open and democratic practices encouraged transparency in leaders' actions, thus helping groups assume ownership of processes. This enactment of leadership allowed the leader and stakeholders collectively to shape the vision and mission of the institution. Openness and democracy were encouraged by a policy context that required broad participation of stakeholders. For some leaders such as Dean Wellington, operating in open and democratic settings meant embracing leadership practices that allowed practitioners to be sincere, forthright, and trustworthy:

> My leadership appeals differently to other people. I am regarded as open, able to see the bigger picture; people trust me. I bring in excitement, new things and challenges. I am viewed as very approachable and available to people--open to where they are at; open to listen to people, their mistakes. I am straightforward and do not bear a grudge. (Wellington, personal interview, May 2002)

Wellington's conception of leadership as captured in this statement suggests that leadership practice is closely tied to providing a vision. Therefore, openness is presented as a prerequisite for the kind of leadership that values cooperative modes of operation. According to Wellington, open and democratic leaders incorporate other people's ideas into the larger picture. For the incumbents, this notion of leadership emphasized behaviors that require leaders to be accessible and to be conciliators by providing their skills for the benefit of others.

In this sample, two leaders, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo and Dean De Beers, denounced cooperation and compromise as preferred behaviors in their leadership practice. Dean De Beers admitted that he did not support compromises as he said, "I am not a conciliator, do not believe in compromise, [and I am] committed to certain kinds of values" (De Beers, personal communication, May 2002). This statement came as a

surprise because De Beers was a skillful and successful negotiator. His opposition to conciliation and compromise as valued aspects of his leadership challenged the notions of cooperation and collaboration that were prevalent in the context of his practice. Tambo also expressed beliefs that were contrary to popular higher education practices and values promoting participative and democratic ideals: "I do not believe in participative democracy; at times I operate in blind faith. I believe in my intuitive feeling, gut feeling, and the ability to draw on our inner strengths" (Tambo, personal interview, May 2002). According to the data, he was the only senior leader in this study who did not believe in participative democracy. At the time of the interview, I did not probe his definition of participative democracy and the meaning of leadership practice based on intuition.

Openness in the practice of leadership was associated with the ability to listen. Leaders frequently mentioned listening as a leadership behavior that provided opportunities for incumbents to let associates share their dreams and frustrations. Listening allowed the leader and associates to open up to each other, thus enabling the leader to empathize with the followers. This attribute of leadership was seen as emanating from an understanding that leaders are there to serve others.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, a strong anti-apartheid activist who had ventured into historically white institutions to bring about change, highlighted the quality of being a good listener as an important aspect of his leadership practice. He mentioned how listening had helped him steer his course in these challenging times at historically white institutions, seeking to understand first and then to query:

> When I read a policy, I try to find out why it was [framed this way]. . . . I have a very questioning leadership style . . . I am a very open, accommodating person. The teacher in me is very strong. I have learned to listen. . . . I have the ability to translate my [leadership] role into my work. I have the ability to speak all languages [in South Africa] and the ability to relate to all cultural contexts. (Tambo, personal interview, June 2002)

Tambo acknowledged that as a leader he had to learn certain skills, such as being a good listener and accommodating divergent views as necessary in his context. From the understandings Tambo presented, one can begin to appreciate the complexity of the leadership context, as most leaders have to navigate through large amounts of data in order to make informed decisions. By involving other stakeholders, leaders are able to develop ingenious ways of confronting institutional challenges.

Exhibiting the application of the newfound spirit of openness and democracy, Vice-Chancellor Coax indicated how higher education institutions in South Africa have adapted the cooperative governance models by involving students on committees:

> I think we have an excellent Student Representative Council [SRC] and work well together. I think we have done many things. There are students on all our committees, . . . including Senate [decision making body on academic issues] and Council [board of governors or highest decision- and policy-making body]. The institutional forums [body looking at change management] worked well. We have a student services committee that is critical in addressing students' needs; it has an equal number of students and staff. We have been able to convince students that there is a need for rational debate. I always tell the SRC when I meet with their members, "Do not expect to get your own way all the time." (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Coax argued that debates were subject to rigorous processes, and no one group could expect to get its own way all the time.

The open and democratic environment that exists at South African higher education institutions seems to have come at a price for students. These newfound freedoms plunged a considerable number of historically black campuses into chaos through student unrest. These disruptive activities emanated from the open and democratic systems prevalent at higher education institutions and played a significant role in undermining the apartheid government. The present government is battling to curtail such activities because they are viewed as undesirable in the new order. The ethos of the new order is to promote the understanding that disputes are won with words and

that no group is allowed to be disruptive anymore. Broad and sophisticated networks of stakeholders on and off campus are in place to ensure that higher education institutions discourage civil disobedience. Internal and external stakeholders are consulted before major decisions are made, to clamp down on protests on campuses.

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, a disciplinarian who led a historically white higher education institution that had been deemed one of the more stable institutions in South Africa, cited a courageous action that exhibited his respect for open and democratic processes. In consultation with major role players, he had made a decision that led to the detention of student leaders on his campus:

> At this campus there was never a lecture that was stopped because of student violence. The place was never closed because of confrontation. There were *toyi-toyis* [unrest-related activities] about three or four years ago, when the student leadership was irresponsible, this was just after democratization, and made unrealistic demands regarding academic and financial exclusions, and went on a rampage. I had the whole SRC arrested and put in jail. But, you see, I did it with the support of the ANC [African National Congress, the current ruling party in South Africa] leadership in this region, who agreed that I was doing the right thing because the political leadership understood. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

The preceding account by Vice-Chancellor Charlie clearly indicates a practice of leadership that requires openness and democracy. He had to consult broadly before enforcing his campus rules because his action had major political ramifications for the community and his institution. His leadership behavior, in which were embedded openness and democracy, helped in avoiding a major public relations disaster. He acted, knowing that he had the support of a major political player and that the institution had to be rescued from lawlessness. In this context, leaders recognize that they are catering to diverse groups with competing interests. They encourage all stakeholders to respect the open, democratic processes that exist at their campuses and abide by them, even though at times they would prefer to oppose them.

From the narratives of Deans De Beers and Ackerman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa, Vice-Chancellor Coax, and others, we learned about the open and democratic leadership practices of these incumbents. Dean De Beers, a philosopher by training, who confessed to believing in gentle persuasion as his preferred leadership behavior, supported open sharing of ideas as one of the democratic principles exhibited in his leadership: "Leadership should be open, no hidden agenda, should not be manipulative, respect different opinions, respect holders of different opinions, be able to take people into [one's] confidence, and be able to change people's minds" (De Beers, personal interview, May 2002). His notions about leadership were contrary to the apartheid-motivated leadership behaviors, which were manipulative and oppressive. He asserted that leaders should try to win their battles by prevailing over their opposition through persuasion. This highlights the importance of listening to others with a critical ear and being able to offer a rebuttal by constructing a better argument.

According to Vice-Chancellor Coax, a skillful communicator, leaders must be multi-skilled in their practice of leadership. He believed that accessibility to one's followers and colleagues enhances leaders' communication practices. He argued that one "must be able to interact; you must be able to communicate, consult, and . . . make decisions when they need to be made" (Coax, personal interview, May 2002). This list of behaviors indicates that leaders need to be able to interact with their followers in order to create the necessary rapport to enable them to fulfill their mandate to represent the best interests of those who place their trust in them. These practices of leadership are reinforced by the beliefs or values of being of service to humanity, leading by example, and providing lenses through which followers can see the bigger picture.

The leadership actions of Vice-Chancellors Coax and Charlie seemed to build on the ideal that they were there to serve others. In the interviews, they both indicated that they had built mechanisms into their busy schedules as leaders of their respective campuses to make sure they visited departments and talked to staff from time to time. Also, they maintained flexible meeting schedules so that they could see staff, faculty, and students within a day of their requesting an appointment. These visits gave them opportunities to interact with ordinary members of the institution, and also offered avenues for leaders and stakeholders to communicate with one another outside committee confines.

Vice-Chancellor Coax had used openness and accessibility to his benefit, saying it was part of his leadership practice geared at being of service to humanity:

> I think I have a very open-door policy. I am accessible to anybody; students and staff are guaranteed to see me within 24 hours. I think that is very important. I think I have the ability to communicate; people trust me, and I can interact with them meaningfully. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

As evidenced in this quotation, Coax operated with an open-door policy. For Coax, this leadership behavior did not stop at the rhetorical level but was translated into practice. His practice of leadership seemed to be strongly influenced by his belief in leading by example and being of service to others.

In sum, being open and democratic as a leader involved aspects of being accessible and having the ability to communicate, persuade, and consult widely with stakeholders on and off campus. These leadership behaviors are congruent with the service notions of leadership that respondents described in their understanding of leadership.

The values of leading by example and being of service to others required the incumbents to visit members of the university community at their places of practice. The

leaders met with staff, faculty, and students in their own work spaces to discuss ideas and problems that were of concern to them. Vice-Chancellor Charlie called this practice of leadership "walking the corridors," whereas Vice-Chancellor Coax termed it "walking the faculty trail." To them, this is a necessary practice that enables leaders to get in touch with people and issues of concern to their followers. It also reinforces the notion that leaders do care about people and their environment. This practice of leadership helps to build a sense of community around the campus and also reinforces the collective responsibility that is prevalent in shared beliefs, leadership, and responsibilities.

Selflessness

Selflessness is a leadership behavior that entails acknowledging others before one's self. To leaders who exhibit this kind of behavior, leadership is about serving others. Their behaviors show a sense of interdependence with the community they serve, respect for followers, and willingness to make sacrifices for the benefit of others. In this study, selfless behaviors were prevalent across leadership positions. Vice-Chancellor Charlie, an ardent believer in serving others, talked about selflessness as an aspect of the leadership behavior that he practiced at his campus:

> I talk to them and make them enthusiastic to understand that the impossible is always possible, provided we work hard and we are focused and we do not go into disruptive activities, which usually arise when you look at self-gain. We are looking at a collective here. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Coax argued that acts of selflessness are important for leadership because self-interest in most cases tends to be disruptive. He believed in dedication to a common vision and energized others to transcend their fear of failure by seeking the good of the collective.

For Dean Wellington, selflessness as a leadership behavior was the translation of his school of education's mission of providing quality education for his region, one of the

poorest provinces in the country. He noted that his school's vision was larger than the institution. He declared that, as uncertainties about rationalizing certain departments in closely situated campuses arose, he and his staff were not worried about the process. Rather, they believed that they would promote quality education in the region even if it meant doing that from a different site or a merged institution. His notion of leadership transcended self-interest and exemplified a leader who saw his mission as being of service to others. The phrase "the dream is bigger than the banner" represented an act of selflessness and commitment to a large vision of serving the surrounding communities.

Another leader who was a strong supporter of service leadership as reflected in selflessness was Deputy Vice-Chancellor Makhenkesi, who related the following ideal to his leadership: "I live students" by putting their interest first; he believed that students are clients. Makhenkesi showed a commitment to serving others, especially students, as exhibited in his leadership philosophy and actions. In talking about his philosophy of leadership, he cited an instance in which he had to oppose the advice of his colleagues to acknowledge students' concerns. He believed his colleagues' actions were not geared to assisting students, one of the groups he was there to serve.

Vice-Chancellor Langa was a staunch believer in shared leadership principles and respected democratic principles as complementary to selflessness. He argued that the collaborative leadership context in South African higher education institutions today calls for shared leadership, which makes the practice of leadership more complex than it was before:

> The work situation, the interaction with the SRC, the interaction with the union is quite different than during those days [the apartheid era] when a vice chancellor or a head of department would fire someone if you found [him or her] drunk on a lonely evening. You would say, "Go away, I have fired you." Then the next morning, you would hire someone else. But these days you have to follow a particular recognition agreement [a legal document that spells out how an

> employer and the unions will relate to one another and also fosters some understanding and cooperation between the parties] to the letter. The first sentence [of the document] will not be firing; it may be a warning or something like that. That is why I was saying, therefore, that the main change for me was that we have to face . . . how do you deal with stakeholders of that particular sector you are involved in that is very important? Now, is the important stakeholder the student body and the workers, that is, the union workers and the student body, those are the internal stakeholders? Let alone, how do we deal with the minister, the external forces, how do we deal with the industry, how do we deal with the municipalities and the parents in general? (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

In this excerpt, Langa described the nature of interactions between leadership and different groups on campus. He acknowledged that the current leadership context has different expectations of leaders. The current leadership cadre is expected to respect the rights of individuals, as agreed upon by stakeholders through negotiated settlements, such as a recognition agreement for staff and service workers. Langa said that the various stakeholders present different challenges for one's leadership practice, and leaders have to understand how to relate to each constituency. There is no room for leadership behaviors that do not respect others and do not serve the collective. Individual interests are de-emphasized; thus leaders are called upon to be selfless.

The open and democratic behaviors described by participants were shared by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Langa. He said that, as a leader, he preferred working in teams. He believed that collective wisdom acquired through teamwork superseded individual wisdom acquired through solo ventures:

> I am comfortable with the leadership where there is a sharing. It is not actually in the sense of debating or directing and so on, but it is very important to actually share with your managers and everybody else. In other words, I mean information sharing and taking into cognizance the contributions of the members. So teamwork . . . is more challenging that individual work.

Langa was encouraged by the fact that shared leadership behaviors support participative governance. He saw collaborative behaviors as essential to serving others. In his

practice, he ensured that information did not remain with one individual but that all individuals were empowered through information sharing and delegation.

In Langa's practice, selflessness was encouraged as a positive leadership behavior that related well to being of service to humanity. The team concept of leadership tied in with his strong belief in empowering colleagues through training and skills development. Langa pointed out the advantage of team leadership:

> I think [it is important] to recognize teamwork rather than the individual because . . . once you do that it means that even when the individual is not around, then the work proceeds as normal. My important thing is that even when I am going away for a day or two, I make sure that there is a manager who acts in my position. I share with some of the managers; they do not like that. (Langa, personal interview, June 2002)

Although Langa was a strong believer in sharing, he said that some of his colleagues did not share his views. "Some feel threatened, that if you put someone in your shoes, the person might perform better than you do." He went on to say that such an attitude should be considered a failure of leadership because it goes against the teamwork and empowerment he supported.

In summary, selflessness was evident in all of the incumbents' leadership behaviors. Most of their actions were geared to serving others, working in collaborative ways, and making sure that they catered to all stakeholders. This kind of leadership practice endorses openness, respect for democratic values, and sharing of governance. These leaders promoted a spirit of collegiality at their campuses. They met with individuals at their work spaces and facilitated discussion in order to understand how they could better serve their communities.

Advocacy

Advocacy was portrayed as zeal to talk about and fight for things one believes in. The participants in this study believed that their leadership practice was an avenue for them to advance academic excellence, empower others, and help create a society that respects diversity, human rights, and the dignity of others. The leaders upheld these social values by promoting equality, racial harmony, and the provision of equal opportunities for all, and they geared their practice to reflect these values. The advocacy aspect of their leadership was based on upholding one's personal leadership philosophy and encouraging one's team to adopt the values espoused by the leader.

Vice-Chancellor Coax, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tambo, and Deans De Beers and Charra believed that leadership is all about making substantial changes that will benefit the society. This attitude was congruent with their belief that struggling for equality and redressing the ills of apartheid are important ideals that should be reflected in their practice.

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, an Afrikaner by birth and a South African by conviction, was an advocate of racial harmony and a strong proponent of social justice. When asked to describe his leadership practice, he stressed the importance of advocacy in his day-to-day activities as a chief executive officer at his institution:

> I am enthusiastic about what I do; I get other people enthused and I can take them along with me. I certainly am not a leader who sits on my backside in my office. I manage by walking; I move, I am active. I am extremely enthusiastic, and I make a lot of noise about the things that are important to me. I do all this within the context of a vision and a mission of the institution, which I have formulated with other people, but I am convinced they would not have formulated it by themselves.

In his statement, Charlie indicated that a leader should be an advocate of what he believes in. His advocacy was carried out within a context governed by the mission and

vision of his institution. He believed that the people with whom he worked should own the mission and vision of the institution. Charlie, an experienced administrator regarded among the experienced vice-chancellors currently leading a higher education institution, reflected on how his practice of advocacy had helped to infuse black students into a predominantly white campus life, where students of color were not allowed to study until he changed the situation:

> When I came here in 1988, we had about 3,000 students, all white; we had this single campus. Today we have more than 10,000 students. We still have the 3,000 whites, so they have not run away; we have been able to keep them. We have managed to keep that core, not because they are better than other students, but you have a core on which you can build. . . . In the past they came from more affluent backgrounds and were better prepared, so they could help with the upliftment. Today we have 10,000, of whom about 6,000 are African, [3,000 are white], and the other 1,000 are coloreds and Asians. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

In the preceding quotation, Charlie indicated how his advocacy for social justice had paid off at his campus. He gave statistics indicating the transformation in student demographics that had occurred at his institution. This success in integrating divergent racial groups on campus was a result of his advocacy leadership and adoption of pragmatic approaches to build a community of South Africans who could live together and share educational resources. This success story reflected positively on Charlie's value of leadership that encompassed providing an environment where all South Africans were treated as equals and benefited from attending a well-resourced higher education institution.

Another leader who believed in advocacy was Vice-Chancellor Coax, who led by example. In his practice of leadership, he ensured that he sat on various selection committees to ensure that the values he espoused were reflected in the selection of senior academics and administrators to join his institution. He said:

> I think another very important case of leadership, perhaps the most important thing we do, is the selection of many top people. So I chair many selection committees to be able to select good professors and good administrators. That is important. (Coax, personal interview, May 2002)

Many leaders, who said that selecting high-caliber staff helps to improve the prestige of the institution, shared this leadership practice. Also, through the selection process, leaders' visions and mission are enhanced.

Vice-Chancellor Charlie, a leader of a white institution that had managed to attract black students because of its amenities and educational facilities, also shared the notion of adapting advocacy to fit one's values. He told of his commitment:

> When I came here I was only the second Ph.D. at this campus, and . . . by next year, we will have about 70% to 80% of our academic staff with either a master's or a doctorate. We have the best group. I think, when you look at what we have achieved in terms of staff qualifications and our status, we have come a long way from the time when I was the second Ph.D. on the academic staff here and we had zero publications, to a report that was just published by the NRF with an independent national panel headed by Professor Martins, vice-chairman of the Council of Scientific Policy of the European Union of the Brussels region. When they came here, they visited all [higher education institutions] and divided them into four categories; the highest category was [those with] the ability to deliver master's and doctoral degrees. There were only two in that category, Protea and Hetzog. We do not know whether we are the best or the second best because [the list] is alphabetical, but we are up there. We would not be surprised if we are the best. I am not saying this to be boastful; I am saying this with a sense of pride because we have come a long way. (Charlie, personal interview, May 2002)

The preceding account provided a glimpse into the history of Charlie's institution, which he had turned around in many ways. This report confirmed that Charlie's advocacy for academic credibility in both words and actions had paid off for the institution. He could boast of his transformation of an academically under-performing institution into a respectable academic powerhouse.

The data also indicated that not all leaders who believed in advocacy were able to translate that belief into positive action. According to Dean Ackerman, one's beliefs and practice could be compromised by institutional practices that went against those beliefs.

In Ackerman's case, his superiors were acting in ways that could be construed as autocratic. Dean Ackerman and Registrar Charra, who were both senior leaders at the same campus, expressed different opinions about their experience at that campus. Their advocacy of values they believed in was either hindered or facilitated by their relations with other senior leaders.

Dean Ackerman, an elderly white English-speaking male who worked with a predominantly black senior leadership, believed that other senior leaders at his institution failed to provide an environment in which he could exercise the values he espoused. He expressed frustration about the influence that leaders he perceived as autocratic had on his own leadership practice. He shared his frustration with the leaders in this lament: "It is extremely difficult to work when [senior leadership] is dictatorial and [you also work in] an uncommunicative environment" (Ackerman, personal interview, May 2002). Ackerman's frustration with his co-workers built on his earlier account of feeling alienated—"People like me do not feel welcome here"—in which he shared how he was struggling to find meaning in his work environment. In his account, the unwelcoming work environment made it difficult for him to participate meaningfully as a leader, and he found other outlets such as the church to bring significance back to his leadership. The church became an ideal place for him to exercise his beliefs about leadership, and it provided a more welcoming environment for him.

Registrar Charra, a black colleague of Dean Ackerman's, did not share any sentiments that corresponded to the challenges Ackerman faced. In Charra's account, it was clear that there was strong-handed leadership at his campus. My interview with Registrar Charra, who had been with the institution for eight years and had risen through the ranks to become registrar, illustrated his belief in strong leadership. In my

introductory remarks to Charra, I spent considerable time explaining that his senior colleague, the vice-principal for research, had given me permission to conduct the interview. Charra demanded documentation of my claims, even though he had agreed to meet with me after the vice-principal for research had made the proper arrangements. From our ensuing discussion, I realized that leaders at Charra's campus were cautious not to be viewed as undermining the boundaries set by their superiors. This suggests an environment in which trust needed to be fostered.

In our discussion, Charra gave no indication that his advocacy role at the institution was stifled by his leadership context. Instead, he seemed to have adopted the leadership values of his superiors, stating that "strong leaders turn out strong subordinates." When pressed to explain his statement, he said, "Strong leaders make firm decisions, even if they are radical" (Charra, personal interview, May 2002). He then related an instance in which he had had to dismiss an employee. This, to him, was radical because it countermanded some of the values of shared governance. Charra explained that unions and students made it difficult for leaders to make unpopular decisions, especially those that went against the cooperative spirit.

Summary

In this chapter I examined the day-to-day practice of leadership as captured in the narratives of the 11 senior leaders who participated in this study. The discussion focused on the values the leaders espoused as part of their personal philosophies. Arguments presented here indicated the intersections among the personal, institutional, and national contexts as they influenced the leaders' practices of leadership. In this chapter, the findings reaffirmed the notion that there were a number of ways in which leaders enacted their values in their practice. They acknowledged that the operational context reinforced

certain beliefs they held, such as being of service to others, leading by example, and having a vision. In their practice they enacted these three beliefs in many ways, using their leadership as a way of empowering others to become future leaders.

Through their behaviors, the leaders promoted shared leadership. Individually and collectively, they strove to respect divergent viewpoints and backgrounds. To them, their leadership practice mirrored their philosophies of leadership as those philosophies intersected with national values of respect for one another, shared leadership, and inclusiveness. These values reinforced a collegial environment in which collaboration, respect for democratic principles, and acts of selflessness were promoted.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

My purpose in this study was to understand, describe, and explain how leaders at post-apartheid higher education institutions in South Africa constructed the meaning of leadership in their context. I probed the construction of the meaning of leadership in a changing context of higher education. Leaders at higher education institutions in South Africa have been challenged to construct a new meaning of leadership against a history of racial segregation and transformation imperatives.

This chapter is organized into six main sections. The first section is the introduction. In the second section, I offer a summary of the research approach. In the third section, I discuss the major findings regarding the perspectives of senior leaders—vice-chancellors (presidents), deputy vice-chancellors, registrars, and deans—from five South African higher education institutions on the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership. Conclusions drawn from the findings are the focus of the fourth section. Contributions of this study to current literature on leadership at higher education institutions are discussed in the fifth section. Implications of the findings for practice and for research are presented in the sixth section.

Summary of Research Approach

Understanding leadership in higher education in South Africa requires navigating a history that is full of myths and misrepresentations, division, and conflict (Hartshorne, 1992). However, the history of South African education provided an important point of

reference to the study participants' understanding and interpretation of the meaning of leadership, the processes influencing the construction of that meaning, and the way in which leaders' understandings were translated into practice.

Although the literature suggested that the South African higher education sector has been under pressure to transform itself from a segregated and authoritarian system into a centrally coordinated and participative system of education (Cloete & Mohamed, 1995), little research has been conducted on the kinds of leadership values and practices that are expected of incumbents who are leading and transforming institutions. Austin (2001), Cloete and Mohamed (1995), White (1997), Ndebele (1997), and Moja and Kulati (2002) pointed out the complexity of leading higher education institutions in the post-1994 era, but their scope and focus were limited because most of them looked at universities as organizations. They said very little about the kinds of values and behaviors the leaders should have and did not mention the factors that influence leaders' meaning construction and the influence of such values on leaders' conceptions of leadership. Thus, this study was undertaken to fill the gaps that exist in the South African leadership literature by looking at how leaders construct meaning in a context that is governed by changing national and institutional priorities.

Three research questions were posed in this study:

1. What does leadership mean to selected leaders of post-apartheid South African higher education institutions?

2. What influences the post-apartheid South African higher education leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership?

3. How have these understandings of leadership affected their practice?

The constructivist grounded theory provided a theoretical framework for this study. I used purposeful sampling and snowball techniques to select participants. The public relations departments and registrar's offices collaborated in identifying prospective participants at the selected institutions and in establishing the initial contact with them. The population for the research included 38 leaders from South African universities and technikons. Out of this population, I focused on 11 senior leaders—vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, registrars, and deans. The selected participants were significant because they occupied the top tier of decision makers in their respective divisions at higher education institutions in South Africa.

The sample for this study included four black male senior leaders, six white male senior leaders, and one black female senior leader. Confidentiality was important in this study because senior leaders at South African higher education institutions constitute a select population in the country. In some cases, there was only one woman on the whole campus who was a member of this select group or one member who belonged to a different ethnic or racial group. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and their institutions, and certain descriptive data were removed from some narratives to protect the participants' identity.

The data set represented five institutions spread across the country. Three institutions were technikons and two were universities. This sample of higher education institutions was picked for the study because it represented a variety of institutional types and had the racial diversity needed for the study.

The primary instruments used in collecting data were in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. Supplementary information was provided by the participants or was available from the institutions' web sites. The data were coded and emergent themes

noted. These themes formed the basis of the study findings, which are discussed in the next section.

Discussion of the Findings

In this section, the major findings of the study are reviewed in relation to the three research questions: (a) What does leadership mean to selected leaders of post-apartheid South African higher education institutions? (b) What influences the post-apartheid South African higher education leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership? (c) How have these understandings of leadership affected their practice? To clarify the findings, I organized them into a conceptual perspective of the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership (see Figure 2).

The conceptual picture presents broad but also common themes about leaders' conceptions of leadership as they emerged from the data. The conceptions of leadership identified in this study reflect the unique experiences of the individual leaders. The data indicated that there were a number of influences on the leadership development process and that leadership practice was a product of the leaders' values and context determinants.

The Meaning of Leadership

Overall, the leaders in this study equated the meaning of leadership with leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision. These three broad themes convey the incumbents' shared and common understanding of the meaning of leadership. Each theme encapsulates a number of subthemes pertaining to the meaning of leadership. Participants understood leadership to be a product of a complex process and to have

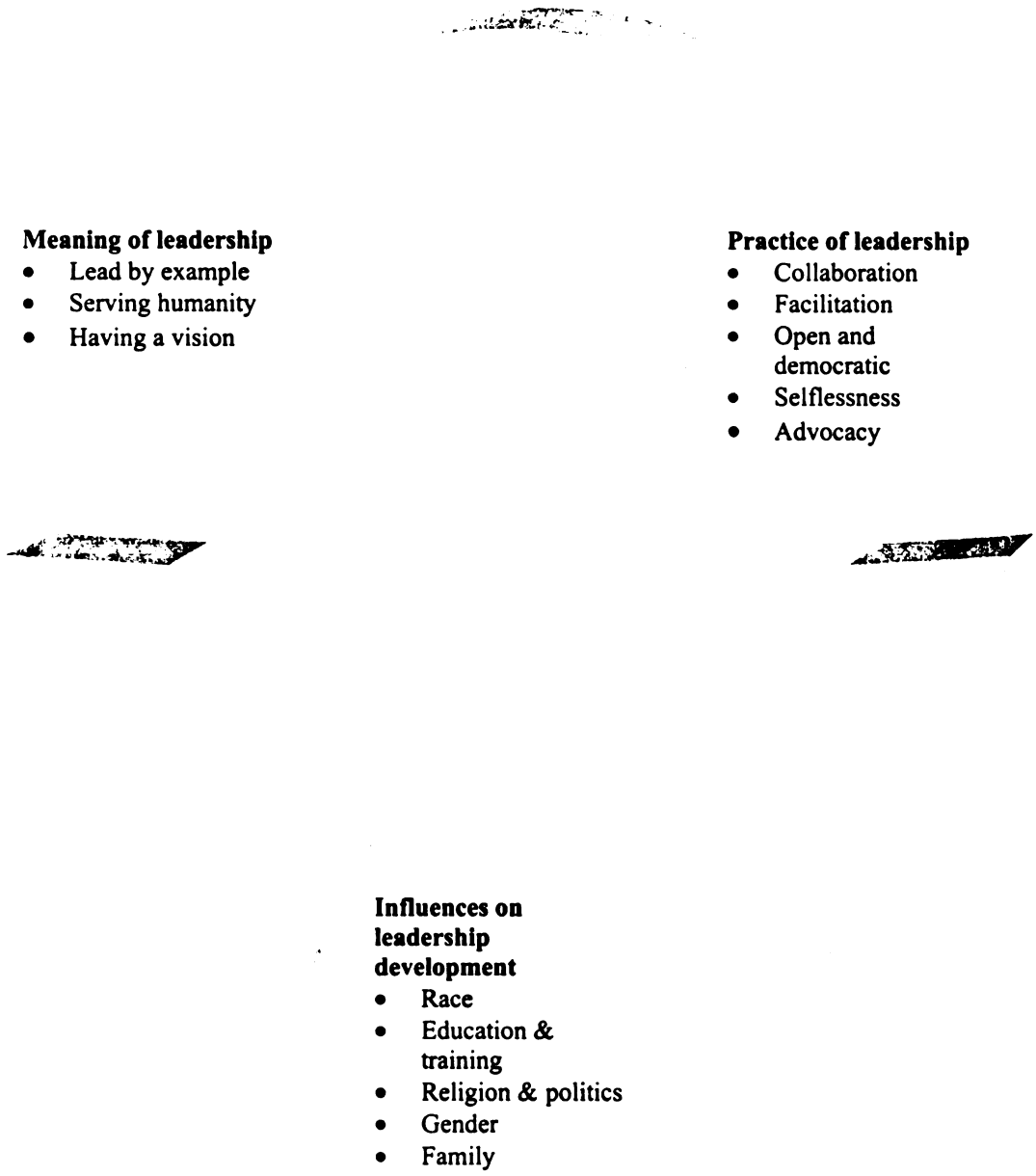

Figure 2: The meaning, construction, and practice of leadership.

emanated from a variety of settings, such as the leaders' childhood years, schooling, college, and professional life. In other words, the incumbents' definitions of leadership were influenced by an array of experiences that they had acquired over a long period.

Leading by example. Leading by example meant modeling the behaviors and values of the organization or preferences for a leader. Further, leading by example meant that incumbents would not ask others to perform unreasonable tasks that they were incapable of doing themselves. The theme of leading by example included leading with credibility and empowering others. From the leaders' perspectives, leading with credibility incorporated being a good teacher, an outstanding researcher, and a service-oriented leader. For these leaders at South African higher education institutions, credibility was a necessary component of leadership; they needed it to convince others to follow their vision of a transformed academic and administrative environment.

Empowering others emerged as a major component of leading by example. The activity of empowering others meant providing opportunities, facilitating growth, teaching, and delegating. Empowerment also referred to the process of liberating previously disadvantaged groups, women and blacks, by offering them knowledge and enhancing their skills. Empowering others as part of facilitating growth was presented as a contribution that the leaders were making to human resource development for their country. For some, it was also an opportunity to undertake initiatives geared at redressing the legacy of apartheid, especially in the human resources area. This notion of empowerment rested on the premise that leaders should also serve as mentors. Empowerment also involved passing on mentoring to leaders' students and colleagues. The leaders' educational and work environments were described as places where leadership development occurred.

Teaching also related to empowerment. The practice of teaching embodied a commitment to empowering others by dedicating one's energies to developing skills, abilities, and knowledge for the advancement of others. The senior leaders explained the empowering aspect of their practice as including the supervision of graduate students and the education and training of junior colleagues at the workplace. To most leaders, teaching offered an avenue to find greater significance in their leadership. Some leaders' life histories evidenced their commitment to teaching as a calling.

Serving humanity. Love for people, humility, commitment to social justice, and being a good listener are all phrases used by the respondents to describe a leader's service to humanity. Love for people and being a good listener were the most frequently mentioned aspects of serving humanity. This philosophy of leadership gave a humane face to the practice of leadership because it emphasized having a meaningful relationship with one's group. This understanding of leadership de-emphasized the traits of power and control. Instead, it promoted serving others first, then leading as a way of extending one's service (Greenleaf, 2002).

Love for people calls for a deep commitment to serve others. This theme presupposes that most leaders accept positions of leadership because they believe such positions will enable them to contribute to the betterment of humanity. For the respondents, serving humanity was not just an act of assuming leadership with an organization; it also entailed a strong sense of commitment to people. This notion of leadership was consistent with the literature describing leadership practice in which people work the common good, the realization of their full human potential. Accepting others' viewpoints was presented as one way a leader could guarantee that he or she was being of service to others.

Serving others placed demands on leaders to be unassuming and sensitive individuals who learned from other people. The respondents suggested that a leader should understand his or her context and be committed to fairness and justice in discharging the assignments as a leader.

Another important attribute of service leadership that emerged from the data was being a good listener. Good listeners were portrayed as those individuals who had positive attitudes and had rapport with their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates; they also paid attention to detail. Leaders recognized the need to maintain open communication by avoiding preconceived notions, as well as understanding and appreciating other people's concerns. The leaders were sensitive to the fact that different people might communicate the same message in diverse ways. Listening was seen as a critical skill necessary for leadership aimed at serving humanity.

Having a vision. Having a vision was found to be an important facet of leadership; it also involved being aware of the complexities of communicating a vision. The incumbents described their visions as vehicles to challenge their colleagues to look beyond the immediate obstacles and focus on the future.

Along with having a vision, leaders needed to be able to motivate others. For example, leaders played a proactive role as translators by decoding the mission of the organization in a way that captured the enthusiasm and interest of others. Leaders engaged in activities and joined forces with others to achieve the envisioned goals. They emphasized the significance of communicating in sharing visions. Simply having a vision was not enough; a vision needed to be communicated to others in a manner that ultimately would result in shared meanings. Leaders encouraged their constituents to share the vision and incorporate their values. Shared values promoted a sense of

ownership, so that the dream could exist in the hearts of the followers. Deciding what mattered and why it was important to the organization were important elements in the leaders' thinking. They worked to convince others that the vision they presented about the future of the organization was the ideal toward which they should commit their energies, skills, and abilities.

Influences on Leaders' Construction of the Meaning of Leadership

A second focus of the study was on the factors influencing leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. These influences were explored in order to understand why the incumbents held their particular views about leadership. It became clear from the leaders' narratives that race was a major factor affecting how participants constructed their meaning of leadership. Education and training was another prominent influence on the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. Religion and politics emerged as two interrelated areas that also influenced respondents' values concerning leadership. Family and gender were other important factors influencing the respondents' conceptions of the meaning of leadership.

The findings indicated that construction of the meaning of leadership is a complex process. Individuals make meaning out of their racial, religious, political, family, and gender contexts. In South Africa, these contexts have contributed to the development of a cadre of leaders who share common values about leadership, such as the importance of integrity in the modeling of desired behaviors of service to humanity and of enlisting others to join in seeing the bigger picture of what is possible.

Race. The study findings indicated that race played the most significant part in respondents' construction of the meaning of leadership. The important role played by

race may relate to the history of South Africa. Under apartheid, skin color and other external features not only were used for classification purposes, but they also were used by the apartheid government to influence who became a leader and in what context. Race also determined the kinds of schools one could attend, the education one could receive, the friends one could have, and the communities in which one could live. In addition, race influenced the kinds of leadership experiences to which the respondents were exposed and their worldview.

The majority of white participants saw race as a nuisance factor that denied them opportunities to interact freely with the international community. In some cases, white leaders had been denied opportunities to present their research at certain conferences due to the internationally imposed academic boycott against white South Africans. Hosts of scholarly conferences could not predict the responses of other participants toward white South African scholars. White respondents noted these conditions as examples of the ways in which their growth had been hampered by race.

On the other hand, black leaders in this study thought that issues pertaining to race had deprived them of opportunities to develop their leadership within South Africa. The incumbents cited past imbalances when it came to resources for education and training infrastructure as deliberate tactics by the apartheid government to stifle the development of their own people. In sum, then, both black and white leaders in this study had grown up in a segregated environment, experiencing differential access to resources, and this had influenced how they developed as leaders and constructed their meaning of leadership.

Education and training. Education and training experiences emerged from the data as the second prominent sphere of influence on leaders' construction of the meaning

of leadership. These experiences included having leadership roles in formal classroom settings and being student leaders. In some instances, opportunities came from organized social clubs or student organizations in which these leaders had been elected or nominated to serve. School environments were described as good nurturing grounds for the incumbents' views of leadership or early inductions into leadership in formal settings. The leaders' education and training experiences boosted their belief in their capabilities and strengthened their commitment to service ideals. International college experiences and the values of their college professors also were major influences on leaders' values and understanding about the meaning of leadership.

On-the-job experiences instilled positive values that transformed the leaders' conceptions of leadership and enhanced their confidence in their own abilities as leaders. The data indicated that on-the-job education and training experiences fostered respondents' beliefs in the skills they possessed, facilitated mastery of the skills they needed to be successful leaders, and instilled the values necessary for them to be respected leaders in their professions. The findings also indicated that on-the-job education and training experiences were a major socialization influence on how leaders constructed their meaning of leadership. That is, the cultures of the institutions in which they worked affected their thinking about leadership.

Continuing education included keeping abreast of developments in higher education management and leadership through reading, attending short skill-oriented courses voluntarily or at the employer's behest, and participating in specially designed skill-development programs on a part-time basis. The findings indicated that incumbents who engaged in continuing education programs valued these experiences. They claimed that such programs had had a profound influence in reshaping their philosophies about

leadership. These experiences also helped to develop their sense of worth as leaders and refocused their beliefs about leadership. Because of a lack of opportunities earlier in their careers, continuing education proved to be a valuable experience, especially for black senior leaders who continued to work at black higher education institutions. In their environments they lacked mentors and skilled personnel to deal with sporadic crises before and after the 1994 democratic elections. Furthermore, they had to develop skills to cope with the transformation of their campuses.

Education, in most instances, was seen as a vehicle to advance one's self and community. Community organizations, church, government, and business organizations played a vital role in the education of most leaders in this study.

Religion and politics. Religion and politics were found to be two interrelated sources of influence that shaped respondents' construction of the meaning and practice of leadership. Religion and politics were responsible for shaping the incumbents' core values, especially in determining what was fair and just. The findings indicated that constituents' construction of the meaning of leadership had been affected by religious and political personalities who were prominent advocates of human rights and fought to dismantle the oppressive apartheid system. Religion and politics helped incumbents espouse high moral standards, compassion, passion for service, commitment to excellence, and advocacy for social justice. An important discovery in this area is that even those leaders who were white, who had been steeped in apartheid theology, had been influenced by other values that led them to be staunch critics of apartheid policies. Some even had risked their lives in the fight against apartheid.

Family. Family emerged as another influential factor in the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership. Parents, grandparents, siblings, and other close relatives

influenced the leaders' life views. For leaders who came from humble beginnings, family values had a considerable influence on their construction of the meaning of leadership. A supportive home environment that nurtured self-efficacy also enhanced these leaders' self-esteem. Respondents who came from underprivileged families cited their circumstances as a source of inspiration for them to succeed in life. Their early struggles played a major part in shaping the leaders' present lives and their belief systems. They were empathetic to students in similar situations and were strong believers in empowering others. The findings confirmed that humble beginnings produced leaders who were committed to empowering and serving others, and transforming social structures and their agencies for the benefit of all.

Gender. Gender appeared to have a significant influence on who became a leader and how the meaning of leadership was constructed. A female respondent indicated that she was uncomfortable with her colleagues' perceptions of her selection as an affirmative action appointment, notwithstanding the fact that she had better credentials for the job than some of her black and white male counterparts. Male respondents, however, indicated that gender did not present problems for them in their environment or with their practice of leadership.

Practice of Leadership

Participants indicated that they incorporated various behaviors into their practice of leadership. There was evidence that the incumbents believed their leadership practice was congruent with their values of leadership, which provided meaning to their activities on a day-to-day basis. Leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision were common understandings that served as sources of inspiration for the incumbents' practices. That leadership practice had to be congruent with their personal values, as well

as the institutional and national contexts. These values reinforced a collegial environment in which collaboration, respect for democratic principles, and acts of selflessness were promoted.

Collaboration. Collaborative practices can be defined as shared governance, in which constituent groups on campus participate as equals in policy- and decision-making processes. The collaborative practices that these leaders espoused implied that they valued inclusive decision-making processes. Elected representatives served on committees as the eyes and ears of their constituents and other members of the organization. However, in contrast to the enthusiasm for collaboration expressed by most of the respondents, some leaders found collaborative practices to be time consuming and to prolong decision making. Yet a majority of participants supported collaborative behaviors over unilateral actions. Collaboration emerged as one of the preferred leadership behaviors at higher education institutions in South Africa. Leaders who operated in collaborative environments acknowledged the post-1994 legislative framework as one of the mechanisms enforcing cooperative governance. The incumbents recognized the complex nature of leading in a sector that was undergoing a major transformation in ethos and practice.

Facilitation. Facilitation was another leadership behavior espoused by the incumbents. It encompassed activities involved in creating and sustaining an environment in which organization members were encouraged to engage in teamwork, in order to make decisions. This allowed them to claim ownership of the processes in which they were involved. The role of a leader in these collaborative environments is to facilitate processes geared to promoting the common good of the institution. The leader's role was portrayed as that of an enabler, an agent of change who was given the unique

role of providing opportunities for others to grow with the organization. The leaders provided resources and support to those who needed them. In this context, leaders viewed themselves as using their roles as facilitators to create a collegial context.

Openness and democratic practices. Openness and democracy emerged as core values that incumbents thought should guide the practice of leadership. Senior leaders embraced integrative modes of leadership; this enactment of leadership allowed the leaders and stakeholders collectively to shape the vision and mission of the institution. The findings indicated that open and democratic practices were also encouraged by the policy context, which required broad participation of stakeholders. The leaders believed that openness was a prerequisite for cooperation. Espousing open and democratic practices as a leader meant being accessible and having the ability to communicate, persuade, and consult widely with stakeholders on and off campus. These leadership behaviors are congruent with the service notion of leadership that respondents mentioned when describing their understanding of leadership.

Selflessness. Selflessness was described as behavior that acknowledges others before one's self. To be selfless leaders, the incumbents were expected to value serving others. Selflessness promoted interdependence and respect for followers. Selfless leaders were willing to make sacrifices for the benefit of others. In this study, selfless behaviors were prevalent across leadership positions. Selflessness was evident in most of the incumbents' leadership behaviors. For example, in their actions, the leaders concentrated on serving others, working in collaborative ways, and catering to all stakeholders. The incumbents' leadership exhibited openness, respect for democratic values, and sharing of governance, which in turn promoted collegiality on their campuses.

Advocacy. Advocacy was portrayed as being zealous in promoting one's beliefs. Participants indicated that they promoted academic excellence, empowered others, and helped in creating a society that respects diversity, human rights, and the dignity of others. In advocating their values, leaders encouraged equality, racial harmony, and provision of equal opportunities for all. Advocacy was based on upholding their personal leadership philosophy and encouraging their teams to adopt some of the values they espoused. The incumbents indicated that their practices mirrored their philosophies of leadership. In turn, the leaders' philosophies were influenced by nationally held values that emphasized respect for one another and participative leadership. These shared values reinforced the leadership practices that the incumbents believed to be appropriate in their workplaces: collaboration, respect for democratic principles, and selflessness.

Summary

This research provided a deeper understanding of South African higher education leaders' understandings of the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership in the post-1994 context. It highlighted common understandings of leadership among selected senior leaders. Family, education and training, race, gender, religion, and politics were major spheres of influence on leadership development. The incumbents espoused leadership practices that encouraged collaboration, selflessness, and advocacy for one's views and beliefs. These behaviors advanced the creation of a collegial context at South African universities. The constructivist frame of inquiry provided different lenses for looking at leadership. This study built on the transformation literature and is one of only a few preliminary studies of leadership in the post-apartheid dispensation. The research makes a contribution to the study of leadership in non-Western cultures using a constructivist lens.

Conclusions

This suggests that a strong correlation exist between the leaders' values and their practices. In turn, the leaders' values and practices were influenced by various aspects of their life experiences. The leaders' context also played an important part in determining their values and how those values were translated into the individuals' day-to-day activities. The following four major conclusions were drawn about the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership among leaders at selected South African institutions:

1. Apartheid played a major role in the leaders' construction of the meaning of leadership.
2. The leaders' values were important to their practice of leadership.
3. Leadership can be taught.
4. Context matters in the practice of leadership.

In the following subsections, these conclusions are explored further, to establish what they represent in terms of the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership at higher education institutions in South Africa.

The Impact of Apartheid on Leaders' Construction of the Meaning of Leadership

Perhaps the most notable finding from this study is that apartheid continues to act as a lens through which incumbents view and explain the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership. Apartheid still plays a vital role in how leaders make sense of their contexts. The incumbents in this study portrayed a strong inclination to meanings and images of leadership that reflected the individual leaders' racial, ethnic, and historical backgrounds.

The preceding conclusion confirms the observations of Hartshorne (1992), White (1997), and Mabokela and King (2001) that apartheid promoted two distinct racial worlds; this observation held true for the participants in the present study. In most cases, apartheid and its legacy defined who became a leader at what kind of an institution. In sum, the leaders in this study believed that apartheid still had a major impact on their construction of the meaning of leadership. Higher education institutions in South Africa still reflect apartheid-created enclaves, where white leaders are concentrated at historically white campuses and black leaders prefer to work at historically black campuses. All of the above-mentioned factors underscore the fact that apartheid is still a key influence on how leaders construct meaning about their practice.

The Relationship Between Leaders' Values and Their Practices

A second major conclusion was that leaders' values were reflected in their practices. For leaders in this study, values had been shaped by a collection of life experiences that guided their thinking, understanding, and actions. From the findings, it was apparent that the incumbents understood that they could find significance in the workplace when their values and practices were synchronized. In this study, practice served as an avenue through which the leaders could continually reflect on their values.

Surprisingly, black and white leaders espoused common value systems despite their divergent upbringings, schooling, and college experiences. They all believed in leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision. Looking at the data, one can conclude that the common value system espoused by the incumbents emanated from a variety of sources, including their college educations. Although black and white leaders learned from different environments, in most cases their overseas graduate education had

exposed them to similar theories and practices of leadership. Furthermore, they might have been exposed to common literature and globally shared values about leadership.

Another important revelation of the findings was that white leaders in this study were inclined to lead by example. They concentrated on concepts that defined or set expectations for higher education leaders, such as leading with integrity, honor, and excellence. Although black leaders shared these values, they tended to emphasize service ideals more than did their white counterparts. The data did not provide any conclusive evidence of these variations based on race, but I believe that the influence of social contexts is a topic worth exploring. Black leaders in this study came from environments in which there was a great need for service, especially in areas of human resource development, poverty alleviation, and efforts geared at correcting social ills that were aggravated by apartheid. To them, their practice had to contribute to building a better future for their (black) communities. Although the leaders' white counterparts shared these ideals, they seemed removed from the issues because they were not as emotionally connected to them as some black leaders who had grown up in those communities and still had relatives who endured such hardships. The black leaders' values virtually constituted their lives; in this sense, their values played an important part in their construction of the meaning of leadership. Context had a significant influence on these individuals' leadership practices.

In their context, leaders portrayed values that were congruent with the transformation imperatives emanating from national, institutional, and global pressures. The values they believed in helped them construct their own sense of identity and bring a sense of purpose to their workplaces. Identity construction occurs when leaders start to define their values and practice in relation to their internal and external environments

(Weick, as cited in Eddy, 2002). For these South African leaders, a strong sense of identity gave them a sense of fulfilling a mission in their day-to-day activities.

In this study, leaders made choices about the values that were significant to them and their practice. The leaders translated their values about leadership into their practice in a manner that was congruent with local institutional norms and understandings of leadership. Their individual values defined who they were, what mattered in their lives, and their passions as leaders.

Leadership Can Be Taught

The study highlighted factors that affect leadership, such as education and training. Teachers, university professors, and mentors also were presented as important partners in leadership development. They played a vital role in these leaders' development, especially in shaping the incumbents' values about leadership. Thus, it can be concluded that both private organizational units and public enterprises provided opportunities for the incumbents to acquire the necessary values, skills, knowledge, and abilities to assume leadership positions.

We may now conclude that leadership can be taught. This refutes the idea that leaders are born, but rather emphasizes that leadership can be nurtured. This situation presents a challenge to families, communities, educational institutions, and private organizations to promote leadership development. In this study, family members motivated the incumbents to seek leadership roles, communities provided opportunities to practice leadership, and in turn private and public institutions provided resources, education, and training for leadership. Experiences in classrooms, student organizations, and formal work settings also were influential.

The Practice of Leadership Is Contextual

Finally, in addition to and independent of all the other findings, context played a unique role in leaders' understanding and practice of leadership. From the findings of this study, we can conclude that leaders' day-to-day practices of leadership were filtered through contextual realities emanating from their historical and institutional contexts. It was also concluded that individual responses to the institutional contexts differed.

At the site of practice, each leader strived to achieve a balance among competing personal interests, national policy stipulations, divergent institutional realities, and superimposed global pressures. It was within this context that individuals made choices about the values that were significant to them and their practice. For example, leaders at historically white institutions were engaged in major transformation initiatives to diversify student demographics at their campuses. These leaders were also infusing black academicians and administrators into their institutions. On the other hand, black leaders were more concerned with overhauling the institutional management systems at those campuses that were facing financial crises. Other black leaders used their context to market their transformation plans and also lobbied for funds to help address systemic problems. Image building and capacity building were at the center of many black leaders' practices.

The institutions at which the leaders worked were influenced by different historical legacies. It is not surprising that black-campus leaders were more concerned with management functions than leadership functions, hence the need for further education and reading on management. In contrast, their counterparts at white campuses were involved in planning exercises and strategic choices to prepare their campuses for competition in the global arena.

Despite having common values about leadership, the respondents worked in different environments. Thus, context serves as an important filter of values when it comes to practice. Often white campuses in South Africa have management systems that have been efficient for years, having had the advantage of being supported by skilled professionals who have served those campuses for a long time. Until recently, black institutions have not managed to attract equally skilled administrators and managers. The current leaders also inherited management systems that are outdated in some respects.

The current leaders are struggling to cope with the ever-changing context in which they operate. Arguably, the national policy still seems to favor better-resourced institutions. Under-resourced institutions will always to trying to catch up with developments in the educational sector. Given this context, it is understandable that even though leaders in this study shared similar broad values about leadership, those values were not applied uniformly, due to their diverse operational contexts.

Contributions to the Literature

This study builds on the transformation literature (Cloete, Kulati, & Phala, 1999; Cloete & Mohamed, 1995; Figaji, 1997; Mabokela & King, 2001) that acknowledges the challenges faced by South African higher education institutions and the tensions presented by the context of change. In this study, I acknowledged that literature and went beyond it to examine the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership in this ever-changing context.

This study also contributes to the needed dialogue on leadership of post-apartheid South Africa because, in the 1990s, literature on higher education in South Africa was dominated by studies on transformation initiatives; there has been little research on

leadership. This study provides the needed focus on leadership issues because little is known about South African leaders' values, leadership paths, and leadership styles.

Research on meaning-making (Amey, 1992, 1999; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) recently has emerged as a formidable component of the literature on leadership. It presents an alternative to the positivist modes of examining leadership, which have proven to be limited in some respects. This study makes a contribution by looking at leadership from a constructivist perspective (Lambert, 1995). Leaders in this study had an opportunity to share their narratives, thus presenting authentic individual perspectives. Further, they were given an opportunity to reflect on the significance of their practice and values of leadership.

This study complements literature on leadership development (Gardener, 1998; Posner & Kouzes, 1998) that looked at common practices to nurture future leaders. The present research relates to this strand of literature because it considered the influences of family, schools, churches, business organizations, and the government on the development of incumbents' leadership practices. The findings highlighted the importance of family members in leaders' formative years, of teachers and college professors in educational settings, and of mentors in both private organizations and public institutions as important players in nurturing future leaders.

When I examined emerging leadership values in South African higher education institutions, the findings indicated that service ideals (Greenleaf, 2001) were prevalent in respondents' practice of leadership. There are senior leaders who remain committed to using their positions for altruistic purposes such as serving others. Leaders across institutional types, races, ethnicities, and genders shared common values such as leading by example, serving humanity, and having a vision. These values are important to the

higher education system because South Africa has just emerged from a history of apartheid, which emphasized differences over commonalities. This study, therefore, presents a new set of commonalities that leaders can build on in an attempt to create shared values for a transformed higher education sector.

Implications

Implications for Practice

This research has a number of implications for practice. The findings about influences on leadership development suggest implications for the hiring of future staff members, especially those who will join the institution as senior leaders. The process of selecting these senior incumbents should be carefully monitored to ensure that the best leaders are selected for these influential positions. Also, the study findings indicated that professors and senior administrators play a vital role in the development of future leaders. The impact of these leaders' values on their students and colleagues should not be underestimated.

This study also highlighted the importance of civic society as a partner in leadership development. Some leaders could not have managed to finish high school if communities, religious organizations, and private sponsors had not extended their resources to fund high achievers who happened to come from needy homes. This research also indicated that sponsors who provided bursaries and fellowships for promising students to go to college and graduate school had made a tremendous investment in the future. They afforded the country a highly skilled and educated cadre of leaders who exhibit high levels of efficacy. Public and private organizations should continue their partnership of providing bursaries and scholarships to deserving candidates. This will ensure that not only those that came from affluent families could

become leaders but all capable students could get the necessary education to assume leadership roles.

A troubling realization that is a product of the past and was raised by the study findings is the failure of higher education institutions to find ingenious ways of breaking apartheid-created leadership patterns. After nine years of democratic rule, higher education leadership still reflects apartheid leadership profiles. Black institutions continue to attract and appoint mostly black senior leaders. On the other hand, white institutions are still struggling to break the apartheid language enclaves of Afrikaners and English speakers. Afrikaans-oriented institutions continue to recruit mainly Afrikaans speakers, and historically English institutions continue to attract primarily those who speak English. Some white institutions, especially historically English-speaking institutions, have managed to attract a small number of black senior leaders, and a handful of black leaders can be found at Afrikaans-speaking institutions. It is important to facilitate cross-institutional movement by creating workplaces at various campuses that are accommodating and welcoming to underrepresented groups.

There is also a need to remove the stigma of being regarded as an affirmative-action or equity-plan appointee when blacks or females are selected for senior leadership positions. The movement in senior leadership positions has been linear; only black senior leaders are moving to white institutions. There is a need to create possibilities for white senior leaders to consider joining historically black campuses. This could help in diversifying the leadership at black institutions, thus reversing the apartheid leadership patterns at South African higher education institutions.

Although it might take a while to achieve some of these results due to disagreement or uncertainty about who should initiate changes, there is a need to devise

innovative ways of fostering such changes. Arguably, this cannot be left solely to institutions; it must form part of national debates on the transformation of higher education institutions, and the government should coordinate the implementation of a national plan.

Implications for Research

In this study, I addressed the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership at South African higher education institutions. Although I conducted interviews with 38 people, data from just 11 participants were used in order to focus on four senior leadership positions (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor, registrar, and dean) at South African higher education institutions (universities and technikons). Responses from the other interviewees could be explored at a later time. This would enhance the current findings by providing comparative data on the perspectives of directors of academic and administrative units concerning leadership.

In selecting the sample, I attempted to balance the representation of males and females. However, I could not use interview data from some females who participated in this study because of their rank or other factors that made it impossible to include them in the final sample. Having a limited pool of women who currently hold senior leadership positions compounded the difficulty of achieving gender balance in the sample. In future research, special attention should be given to women leaders at higher education institutions, without targeting the specific leadership positions. .

In addition to taking gender into account, future researchers could also probe more fully the influence of race and ethnicity on leaders' conceptions of the meaning and practice of leadership. Also, a deeper analysis into the ways in which leadership is understood and enacted in diverse types of institutions (technikons versus universities) as

well as historically white institutions versus historically black institutions would be useful. Since the advent of democracy in South Africa, there has been no interest in studies of the impact of apartheid on leadership at South African higher education institutions. In this study, apartheid dominated the interviews as an important variable influencing the incumbents' construction of the meaning of leadership and their leadership values. It would be worthwhile to conduct research on the influence of apartheid on leadership conception, perhaps with a larger sample. Exploring the legacy of apartheid might prove difficult because engaging in honest discussions on the topic is problematic. Perhaps apartheid is a legacy of a past that many South Africans wish they never had. It is now difficult to find individuals at South African higher education institutions who supported apartheid.

A study that involves student leaders, labor leaders, departmental chairs, and council chairs who were deliberately excluded from participating in this study could enrich our understanding of the leadership phenomenon. These role players are important in the life of higher education institutions, and their views are essential in understanding the meaning, construction, and practice of leadership.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

This protocol for interviews will be used for an interview that is estimated to last approximately an hour to two hours.

Individual interviews: A protocol will be administered to leaders at higher education institutions in one session and follow up session(s) will be scheduled as necessary. The interview(s) will probe the leader's perspective on the meaning, construction and practice of leadership. Questions will focus on the following:

- Their definition of leadership
- The factors that influence the leader's construction of the meaning of leadership
- Examples of the application of their leadership model in their day-to-day leadership practices.

Here is the basic protocol for the interviews

Please note due to the open ended questions interview format the precise wording may vary with each interview.

1) Are there any leadership roles that you have held prior to this one?

   Probe:

   - Where and for how long

2) Tell me about your self, using the words that best describe you as a leader....

   Probe:

   - Why have you chosen these words?

3) In your own words how would you define leadership?

Probe:

- Why do you feel the way you do about leadership?

1) What is your leadership philosophy?

Probes:

- Tell me a story that exhibits some of your values about leadership?
- How does your philosophy of leadership relate to what you have just told me?
- Are there any social, historical and cultural issues that have influenced your construction of leadership?
- What events and people in your life if any have shaped they way you think about leadership?

2) Has your thinking about leadership evolved over the years?

Probes:

- If so, what are those changes in your thinking about leadership have change?
- What do these changes mean in the context you work in?
- Are there any events or people that have contributed to the way you think about leadership?
- If so please explain to me how they have done so and why these events and people are important.

3) How has your understanding of leadership influenced the way you as an institutional leader lead?

Probes:

- Tell me a story that exhibits this understanding of your leadership practice.
- Please give specific examples of how your understanding of leadership affects your practice?
- What is it that you feel most proud about regarding your leadership practice?
- What other things might you want to share with me about your leadership practice?

4) How do you believe others perceive you and your leadership practice?

Probes:

- Does this differ by constituents group?
- What attributes of leadership are valued by the academic staff and students at this institution?

8) Are there any things that you might want to with me about leadership in the post apartheid higher education sector?

Thank you for your time.

10.3. Follow-up interviews

In cases where there are still unresolved questions after the initial interview, a follow up interview will be scheduled to seek clarification if possible. The researcher will send excerpts of the interviews and summary of the researcher's reflective journal of the interview session to the participants. The following questions will be asked:

1) What is your reaction to the interview transcript and the researcher's impressions?
2) Are there any statements that you would like to modify?

Yes/No

- If so what changes are needed

3) Would you like to add comments to the interview?
4) Have I missed any thing you think is important to this study?

Please comment:

Thank you for your feedback.

Appendix B

Letter of Invitation

Dear Public Relations Officer:

I am a doctoral student at Michigan State University in educational administration and a faculty member at the University of Venda for Science and Technology in South Africa. It is my belief that this study titled: **The Meaning, Construction and Practice of Leadership at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa** presents an excellent opportunity for leaders at your institution to reflect on their leadership in a transforming higher education context in South Africa.

The researcher would like to interview senior leaders at the ranks of principal, vice principal, registrar, director of a unit and dean of faculty or school. I am targeting to have the first phase of interviews in May and follow up interview early June 2002; all meeting times will be scheduled at times that are mutually agreeable to the leaders and the researcher. There will be two interviews; both sessions will each last approximately 60 minutes to 120 minutes. The interviews will be confidential and the identity of the participants will be concealed throughout the research.

The information provided through this process will be used as part of a completion of a doctoral study in Educational Administration at Michigan State University. Please find an attached consent for participation in this study that can be faxed back to me. I am required to request a signed consent form by my university in order to conduct this study. If you have any question regarding this project please feel free to contact these persons listed below:

Researcher: Luvuyo Lumkile Lalendle, M.A
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MI, 48823, Phone/ Fax: (091) 517-355-1213
Email: lalendle@msu.edu

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Michigan State University, 48824
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http://www.msu/edu/user/ucrihs/

I would appreciate if you could fax back the consent forms by April 10, 2002. Upon my arrival in mid April I will visit your office to schedule appointments with senior leaders at your institution.

Yours truly,

LUVUYO LALENDLE
PhD. Student in Educational Administration
Michigan State University, East Lansing
MI, USA.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Research Project: *The Meaning, Construction and Practice of Leadership at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa.*

Dear Sir/ Madam,

As you are currently placed in a position of leadership at a South African Higher education institution, I invite you share some of your personal experiences about leadership. The research project examines the meaning, construction and practice of leadership at South African universities. There are three main questions that are central to this investigation: what does leadership mean to leaders of post apartheid South African Higher Education? What influences the post South African higher education leader's construction of the meaning of leadership? (For example historical, cultural, political and social factors) How do their understandings affect their practice of leadership?

If you choose to volunteer to participate in this project, you will participate in two taped interviews (approximately 60—90 minutes each) with the investigator about your understanding of leadership, how that meaning is constructed and practical examples in your day to day activities that exhibit you understanding of leadership. In total, the amount of your time required over the course of the study will be approximately three hours (180 minutes) to four hours (240 Minutes). All meeting times will be scheduled at time mutually agreeable to the investigator and the participating leader.
Your participation is strictly voluntary, you may refuse to answer questions or discuss topics at your discretion. You may withdraw your participation in the project without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Confidentiality for participants will be maintained. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. Your personal identity will not be made explicit in any written report or commentary that is submitted for publication. You are entitled to an executive summary of the project and the transcripts of the interviews upon request when the project in finalized.

Any or all the following people are available for you to contact with any questions or concerns that may be raised by participation in this study:

Researcher: Luvuyo Lumkile Lalendle, M.A
1447 B Spartan Village, East Lansing
MI, 48823, Phone/ Fax: (091) 517-355-1213
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http://www.msu/edu/user/ucrihs/

Indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this project by completing and returning a copy of a signed and dated form.

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:.....

To ensure accurate data, the researcher requests to audio tape the interviews. After the transcription of audiotapes has taken place, the researcher will destroy the audiotapes Please indicate your voluntary agreement that the interview be audiotaped for the purpose of ensuring accurate data.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:.....

Please note that this has to be faxed back to Luvuyo Lumkile Lalendle 091-517-355 – 1213. The researcher will reimburse any cost you might incur in faxing the consent form.

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