chapter

10

Leadership and leading

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CASE STUDY The Flying Dutchman

Ruud Gullit was one of the most successful European footballers ever, having led with great skill the Dutch team which brought 'total football' to its peak in the 1980s and being recognized as Europe's Player of the Year. A popular and attractive figure, stylish and articulate, he was made for media celebrity. He took over as manager of Newcastle United Football Club (NUFC) at the beginning of the 1998–99 season, following two successful years in charge as player-manager at Chelsea. During his time in London he steered the Blues to victory in the FA Cup and a sixth place finish in the Premier League – this at a club which had achieved little for some 20 years. NUFC, likewise, had flirted with success over the previous decade in particular, but at the time of Gullit's arrival had not won any trophies since the Inter-Cities Fairs' Cup (now the UEFA Cup) in 1969:

> Yes there were the ups of the Nineties, the romance of the Kevin Keegan (former manager) years, the coup of signing Alan Shearer and the mass blubfests after losing vital games to Manchester United and Liverpool, but the trophy cupboard has been bare for 30 years. (Wilson 1999a: 4)

Moreover, this flirtation had been achieved at an extraordinary financial cost, mostly involving massive cash injections by the Hall family who were the major shareholders. The pressure for Gullit to deliver clear-cut success was therefore enormous – and was made worse by NUFC's entry on to the alternative investment market of the stock exchange.

Gullit's achievements and standing as a player are a matter of record and at Chelsea his skills had been regularly displayed for an English football audience, not just highlighted in the occasional international match for Holland or AC Milan. This made him very different from the previous two Newcastle managers (Kevin Keegan and Kenny Dalglish). Although both still enjoy legendary status among the English football-watching public – and their counterparts elsewhere in the world – Keegan and Dalglish's playing careers were very definitely in the past.

Gullit was also decidedly different in terms of his race, his background and his ability to market himself:

> The dreadlocked figure of Ruud Gullit disembarked from an Amsterdam flight promising the return of 'sexy football' to Tyneside. Whatever the future held, it would not be dull. (Hutchinson 1997: 240)

> Black, Dutch and the epitome of cool, Gullit is a master of six languages … he wasn't slow to appreciate his marketing appeal. Utterly at home in front of the camera, with discreet good tailoring and a relaxed, intelligent manner, Gullit knocked the spots off cliché ridden football commentary. (Lindsey 1998: 7)

But by August 1999 – just 366 days into his tenure – it was all over for Gullit and NUFC: he resigned. What exactly had gone so badly wrong?

At both Chelsea and Newcastle, Gullit introduced a system of squad rotation – a system which other clubs have used but in the UK only Manchester United appear to practise with complete success. He argued that it kept players' legs and minds fresh and that, given the number of matches which Premier League clubs face – the domestic league, two domestic cups and (for some) European competitions, as well as international commitments for many players – rotation was particularly important in order to rest players and have slack in the system to cover for the inevitable injuries. But squad rotation is unpopular with many players and if a player is to be dropped for a specific game, then a careful and sensitive approach by the manager is required. Many managers insist on being the one to tell a player that he has been left out and explaining why, especially because of the very real danger that this may pose to the player's career, their chance of international recognition and so on. Every football game – in the top flight in particular – is a chance for players to perform – literally and metaphorically. Players view games as self-marketing opportunities; to prove their worth to their club and/or other clubs, especially now that

international transfers are so commonplace. So if a player does not play (or if he does not play well), then ultimately his tenure at a club, as well as his opportunities to move elsewhere and command higher wages and more prestige as a result, are at risk.

But Gullit did not explain to his players why they had been dropped. He did not even tell them himself when he left them out. Instead, at Chelsea and then again at NUFC, he left them to find out by reading the team sheet, expecting them to work it out for themselves. He also intimated to his players that if they did not like his system they could request a transfer. Gullit's treatment of Gianluca Vialli in particular (who, ironically, replaced him as manager) attracted critical attention during his reign at Stamford Bridge, and he repeated the pattern at St James' Park. In an interview, former NUFC captain Robert Lee said:

I wasn't one of Ruud's lovely boys ... [but] we didn't have a massive row. We had disagreements rather than rows. The problem was that, because I was the captain, I was the one player he really talked to. At the start, I thought Ruud liked me, we seemed to get on, but he didn't like being disagreed with and, as captain, my job was to put forward the players' viewpoint. By the end, he didn't speak to me at all. He didn't want me anywhere near the training ground. (Taylor 2000: 3)

As Lee himself testifies, the stripping of his captaincy and Gullit's subsequent refusal to give him a squad number served to unite public opinion against the manager. Also evident in his comments is the way in which Gullit behaved towards Alan Shearer, the local boy who was the club's star player and the England captain:

Ruud didn't realize that I'd played for Newcastle for seven years, and that counted for something ... I think he wanted the supporters to love him more than Alan [Shearer], but he didn't realize the exceptional support Alan has here ... in the end they showed they loved Alan more ... He wanted the fans to love him more than any player. He couldn't accept that Alan was a local hero. (Taylor 2000: 3)

Shearer, a lifelong NUFC devotee, brought back to his northeast origins by Gullit's predecessor Kevin Keegan, is hero-worshipped in the region. He succeeded Lee as club captain. Moreover, Shearer had established himself at club and national levels to such an extent that he was regarded as an automatic selection both for NUFC and England. But before Gullit even joined NUFC, he publicly criticized their expensive purchase of Shearer – which at the time set a national record of £15 million – as being 'a crazy price, a waste of money' (Walker 1998: 1). He went on to describe Shearer as follows in his first press conference at the club:

Shearer's an out-and-out goalscorer but he doesn't seem to get any joy from the game if he fails to hit the target. I prefer players who contribute in other areas and have a sense of fun ... Alan is the captain of the national team and scores a lot of goals ... he is important but a whole lot of players are important for the team. Nobody is more important than anybody else. (Walker 1998: 1)

Gullit went on to drop Shearer. Eventually he dropped him for a rainswept derby against hated local rivals Sunderland – the fervent rivalry between the two cities is legendary inside and outside football and dates back to the English Civil War in the seventeenth century – brought him on with only minutes of the match to go and then blamed Shearer and his fellow substitute Duncan Ferguson for the subsequent defeat.

This was, furthermore, only one in a disastrous series of results which had seen NUFC slip to one place above the bottom of the Premier League, having taken just a single point from a possible 15. The bitter pill was made even harsher by the fact that Sunderland's star striker, Kevin Phillips, who scored the winning goal in the game, had been the apprentice who cleaned Shearer's boots when they were both at Southampton. As if to add insult to injury, Gullit had also suggested that the derby game wasn't even a proper derby because Sunderland fans and Newcastle fans live and work in different cities.

Gullit was also a 'semi-detached' manager. He never settled in the northeast and instead commuted to St James' Park from Amsterdam on a regular basis. In a climate where club support still runs broadly speaking along geographical lines, and especially in a football-obsessed area like Newcastle, this could be seen as a serious tactical error on his part: English managers are expected, by both fans and players, to be totally focused on their work, to literally sleep, breathe and eat football. Instead Gullit left his NUFC charges 'home alone'. Moreover, his implied criticism of the area in not relocating there – apparently his partner did not like Newcastle – went down badly with the fans, who are very proud of their town and its heritage, and indeed its more recent stylishness. He had been subject to censure at Chelsea for similar reasons:

Word leaked from the [Stamford] Bridge [Chelsea's headquarters] that he really wasn't that involved, [Graham] Rix and the backroom boys did everything; Gullit was just a figurehead. Again most of the lads in the stand would hardly have accepted that as sufficient grounds for a P45 [tax statement given on termination of employment, usually indicating the sack]; if he had done nothing else it was his presence which had delivered [Gianluca] Vialli, [Gianfranco] Zola and [Roberto] Di Matteo. But then came the crunch ... Gullit didn't care enough. He was only interested in the club as a vehicle for his own ego ... For the fan this is a crime deserving of punishment much greater than redundancy. Not caring about the club: that is the charge levelled at those asset strippers of Brighton and Doncaster [clubs who have now left the football league]. (White 1998: 25)

Ammunition for the criticism that Ruud Gullit is a 'semi-detached' manager of Newcastle has been supplied a day after the club's stormy annual meeting with the Dutchman on a seven-day family break in Amsterdam. (Thomas 1998: 22)

The Dutchman's managerial reputation is in tatters [after his resignation from NUFC], with the same accusations of aloofness, complacency and poor man-management pursuing him from both his English clubs. (Wilson 1999b: 9)

So in the August of 1999, Gullit was manager of a team which was staring relegation in the face after only a handful of games. He had also managed to alienate two local heroes as well as other fans' favourites such as Dietmar Hamann, David Batty and Keith Gillespie, who all moved to play for other competing big-name clubs (Walker 1999). Furthermore, the signings he made – the big, injury-prone Scottish striker Duncan Ferguson and moody Croatian international midfielder Silvio Maric, for example – had failed to match those he had attracted at Chelsea or perform with any consistency. Moreover, he had few laurels to rest on: NUFC had finished a disappointing 13th in the league the previous season and, despite reaching the FA Cup final for the second year in succession, had been humiliated at Wembley by a rampant Manchester

United. Scarcely surprising, then, that he jumped rather than being pushed just three days after the ill-fated derby, that he was not given the traditional training ground farewell by the players and that he was subsequently replaced by 'Uncle Bobby' – local lad Bobby Robson, former NUFC player and England manager, and another lifelong fan of the Magpies. By Christmas 2001 they were heading the Premiership once more, at the end of 2001–2 season finished 4th with a place in European competition, and heading the top scorers in the Premiership was the veteran Shearer.

SOURCE: Adapted from Sarah Gilmore (2006) 'The mother's breast and football managers', in Joanna Brewis, Stephen Linstead, David Boje and Tony O'Shea *The Passion of Organizing*, Malmö: Liber and CBS Press.

Questions about the case

1 How would you characterize Ruud Gullit's leadership style?

2 What considerations seem to be most important to Gullit?

3 What kinds of relationships would you expect Gullit to have with:
   (a) his players?
   (b) the fans?
   (c) the board of directors?

4 How do you think Gullit would think that it is appropriate to develop future football managers?

5 How would you characterize the leadership approach at NUFC?

6 What culture or gender influences could have been operating in this situation?

Introduction

What is leadership? The question has remained without a satisfactory conclusion since at least the time of Plato and his advocacy of the need for philosopher-kings (Wood 2005:1101). Since the early twentieth century thinking on leadership has changed almost every decade and there are contested conclusions on the necessity for leadership, and which leader behaviours should be regarded as negative or positive. Those who have sought to find a common definition of leadership are inevitably confronted with frustration. Mats Alvesson and Stanley Deetz (2000) noted that one of the only viable definitions that most people might agree with is that it has something to do with influence, which of course connects it with power (2000: 52, citing Yukl 1989). In their view the quest for a definition of leadership is impractical, misleading and would inevitably obstruct new ideas and interesting ways of thinking about the topic. Instead they suggest that we should frame the study of leadership around the question of 'What can we see, think, or talk about if we think of leadership as this or that?' (2000: 52).

While there were early works on the nature of leadership in the nineteenth century, modern leadership theory gained momentum during and after the First World War, partly as a result of demands from the military to identify leadership potential in officer recruits. As a field of research and an area for consultancy it flourished in the United States and almost all of the early research was developed there, establishing a position of some theoretical and methodological dominance. It is still the case that many business courses and texts are dominated by US-based theories of leadership, and most of the popular leadership gurus tend to be American. Challenging these theories, which were largely influenced by psychology and science-based methods of research, required a paradigm shift in how we think, talk and write about leadership (Fairhurst 2007: 2; 2008). It is extremely hard to dislodge, challenge or critique ideas that have become entrenched and are supported both materially and intellectually by some of the wealthiest universities and corporations in the world. The mass market

for leadership books is driven by a formula (large print, simple messages, *Fortune 500* cases) that is delivered by teams of ghostwriters who know how to appeal to an audience, particularly by discouraging them to be critical of what they read (Sinclair 2007: 26).

Great political or military figures who became legendary in their own right for inspiring others through their vision, commitment to high ideals and feats of heroism, were influential in early theories of leadership in business and management. Trying to identify the traits that distinguished such leaders from the rest of the population was seen as important in nurturing other potential leaders. Such leaders were thought to embody the essence of heroism and greatness – the most desirable and sought-after qualities of humankind – and this notion still haunts some contemporary leadership theories, such as those associated with transformational leadership in the 1980s and 1990s (Grint 2000; Lawler 2005; Fairhurst 2007, 2008). Heroic leadership is associated with commanding mass loyalty, commitment, trust, dedication, respect, obedience, love or even worship from followers and, in the extreme, having them lay down their lives for their leader or the leader's cause. The power and influence of such an image of leadership is seductive because it suggests that a lot of things can be solved by leadership alone, and by a lone heroic leader. One of its downsides it that it is messianic, and can promote passivity in organizations that wait for a hero to arrive or emerge, and bring them deliverance.

Early theory bequeathed a *leader-centric* paradigm with a focus on a single relational reality – that of the individual leader – as the pre-eminent source of knowledge on leadership (Fairhurst 2007: 8–9; 2008; Wood 2005: 1101–2). There is a dominant discourse of leadership built around the notion of the lone, masculine leader single-handedly determining and controlling what happens in an organization through feats of visioning and strategizing. Leaders are thus given voice while followers are meant to be silent, and the leader is always a powerful subject while the follower is a passive one (Collinson 2005, citing Ray et al. 2004; Prince 2005). In this chapter we present an overview of leadership theories beginning with early studies of leadership that have laid the foundation for many contemporary approaches. It is important to appreciate that after the Second World War, with the need for a post-war reconstruction and the rise of the Cold War (the struggle between the USA and USSR for ideological supremacy), leadership theories were preoccupied with identifying the benefits and harm of democratic versus authoritarian leadership on shop-floor management, and getting the right mix between production demands and workers' motivational needs. The instability of the 1970s and a major recession refocused attention on the need to manage radical change successfully and this gave rise to a new paradigm of leadership built around transformational or visionary leadership and the influence of a single leader that came to be dubbed 'heroic leadership' (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005: 51–4). As part of looking at heroic leadership, we also explore the 'dark' side of leadership – a topic often omitted from management texts. Theories of narcissistic leadership present leadership as a form of pathological behaviour of the individual and usually typified by an *alpha male* – a person seeking to dominate, control and overpower others (Pullen 2006; Fairhurst 2007: 107; Flett 2007).

We also look at how the study of leadership has changed in recent years to include consideration of followership and less heroic interpretations of transformational leadership. However, these approaches still preserve the binary of leader and follower and the tendency to privilege one at the expense of the other – or alternatively replace leader-centrism with follower-centrism (Collinson 2005). We then present an interpretative and social-constructivist approach to leadership that is paradigmatically

different from most mainstream leadership studies. In this approach it is the process of leading that is studied and how it emerges through the interplay of meanings, sense-making and language-in-use to create different discourses of leadership.

Mainstream leadership research exemplifies gender suppression and/or blindness and the downplaying of differences in what are predominantly masculinist discourses of leadership (see Chapter 2). We look at the ramifications of this, particularly in how men and women develop 'leaderly' identities in relation to these discourses. The Western-centric view of leadership is also addressed by looking at cross-cultural issues of leadership, which highlights further serious problems that confront us in how differences are accounted for in mainstream leadership approaches. We follow a broadly historical trajectory, building on past theories to present a critical, discursive and relational approach to leadership.

Approaches to leadership and critical alternatives

We face significant challenges in moving beyond some established leadership theories to a critical, discursive, processual and relational approach to leadership. One of the greatest of these has been the dominance of a particular style of experimental psychology, particularly during and after the Second World War, in leadership studies. The effects of this have been profound and drawing on the work of Gail Fairhurst (2007: 8–15) we can identify four particularly deeply held assumptions that still pervade leadership studies:

1. *Individualism*
   - Leadership psychology tries to *get behind* experiences to find connections between cognition, emotions and behaviours. It reduces leadership to statements of intentions of behaviour by individuals who are identified as leaders, or to judgements of the past so that real ongoing experience is not studied. If it is, it is done in artificially controlled ways such as in laboratory experiments or surveys. Leadership is treated as a set of variables either 'inside' (cognitions, emotions) or 'outside' (behaviours) the person. This leads to a focus on a single reality – that of the individual leader – as the source of all knowledge on leadership. This leader-centrism means that the individual comes to define all levels of analysis, be it the dyad (pair or couple), the team/group, the organization and so on. Thus studying the individual leader takes preference over accounting for leadership in terms of social and cultural influence or leadership in action.

2. *Essence of leadership*
   - Leadership psychology is focused on studying *traits, styles or behaviours* of leaders and seeks to identify attributes or qualities that are meant to capture the true nature of leadership, irrespective of context and circumstances. Even when context (the type of place, organization or situation) is considered as a variable in which leaders must perform, it is in terms of finding the best match of a leadership style to the context, or both. The logic follows that if we keep asking enough leaders about what they do, through surveys and the like, we will finally arrive at the truth or essence of leadership.

3. *Dualistic views of power and influence*
   - In keeping with unitary and pluralist views of power (see Chapter 6), leadership psychology has treated power as a negative and repressive property and distinguishes it from influence, which is made synonymous with leadership. This duality means that leadership, be it treated as transformational or heroic (see below), is portrayed as *positive influence*.

4. *Untheorized/exaggerated agency*
   - While leadership is treated as a force of change, leadership psychology pays scant attention to *agency* or *action*. The first consequence is that leadership research deals with leadership in an abstract way without looking carefully at how the organizational entity in which a leader is supposed to lead got there in the first place and how it has been maintained on an ongoing basis. This split between the person and the organization means that as the agent responsible for change, the leader is *untheorized* as such an agent. This also means that leadership remains an individual accomplishment rather than being seen as part of organizational processes in which tasks have to be accomplished and problems solved, both collectively and individually (Fairhurst and Putnam 2004; Fairhurst 2006; Wood 2005: 1102–3). It is not surprising then that an *undertheorized* view of task performance and accomplishment pervades mainstream leadership studies.
   - Leadership psychology also reinforces the notion of *exaggerated agency*, which is derived from leader-centrism and the explicit emphasis given to individualism and leadership heroics. This contributes to a view that followers need leaders, are dependent on them and cannot function without them, thus amounting to what can be termed a belief in 'the power of one' (Fairhurst 2007: 24, citing Gronn 2000, Robinson 2001; Fairhurst 2008).

Amanda Sinclair (2007) also considers how conventional notions of leadership act as a dominant discourse ensuring that certain things are suppressed, marginalized or left out of accounts of leadership. Such a discourse of leadership provides us with a fairly powerful frame of reference (see Chapter 1) that makes it hard to think 'outside the square' about leadership in ways that challenge the conventional wisdom and assumptions of mainstream theories (Fairhurst 2005; Grint 2007). She identifies a number of common themes in the mainstream leadership discourse to illustrate what is left out of many of the accounts of leadership. These dominant themes are underpinned by the following assumptions:

- a *weighty responsibility* usually borne by men in high places
- an *individual performance* despite claims that followers contribute to performance
- an *activity that occurs between the elites* of the military, business and politics around the interests of large-scale global corporations and markets
- normally associated with an organization's *growth, expansion or material success* through missions and goals that are elevated to the highest ideals
- of such importance that a large industry is needed to support the *development and training* of leaders
- of such importance that it is the most researched of all subjects and is dominated by a proliferation of *instruments and methods* used to measure leadership or its potential
- a task requiring disembodied, cerebral *command* and thus assuming that the physical manifestations of leading and following are irrelevant
- assumed to be of *inherent moral value* neglecting the frailties, vulnerabilities or the dark side of the leader's psyche. (Sinclair 2007: 28–9)

What is left unsaid in these accounts of leadership include the following:

- the hunger for *power*
- the *power structures* within wider society that allow some individuals to rise more 'naturally' and easily to power
- the *emotional and unconscious dynamics* that explain how leaders gain legitimacy and unquestioned following with often disastrous consequences

- the proving ground for leadership in childhood and adolescence that shape *desire, self-image and identity*
- the *physical and embodied* nature of leadership
- the *sexual performances and identities* that are often played out in leadership roles
- the role of *diversity* in shaping the habits of leadership
- the *long-term outcomes* of leadership, both failed and successful. (Sinclair 2007: 29)

These are not exhaustive of all the possible ways in which we can frame our approach to leadership in order to challenge existing assumptions. A number of the omissions noted by Sinclair in relation to gender and sexuality have already been dealt with in Chapter 2. However, a critical perspective entails two key assumptions – leadership is inadequately portrayed in mainstream theories, and we need radically to transform our approach to how we study it or dispense with the concept altogether (Fairhurst 2007: 5; 2008). However, as Martin Wood (2005) and Hans Hansen, Arja Ropo and Erika Sauer (2007) observe, leadership theory is already moving in new directions although there is still much to be done.

The classical studies we will be looking at in the next sections cover the trait, leadership style, contingency and situational approaches to leadership. These schools of leadership well illustrate the points raised above in relation to leadership psychology and what has been left out of early accounts of leadership. That these theories were developed in different periods and eras, with different challenges to those facing us today, is obvious, but this does not mean that the paradigm under which they were developed has lost its influence in framing how we think and talk about leadership – partly because the theorists themselves thought they were identifying universally relevant human characteristics. There is much to be learned from a critical examination of how these schools of thought engaged with the problems of leadership as they saw them.

The trait approach

The most basic approach to understanding leadership began from the assumption that good leadership resides in the innate abilities of certain individuals who are considered to be born leaders – usually 'great men' of history such as Henry V, Napoleon Bonaparte, Abraham Lincoln and so on. Often, however, industrial leadership qualities were simply associated with having become very rich, famous and powerful. In the US, they were made synonymous with great industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller and Alfred Sloan (of GM).

As the practice of industrial psychology developed, greater emphasis was placed on identifying the very specific characteristics or traits that constitute the behaviour of good leaders, and examining the common factors. *Trait theory*, as it became known, was particularly popular because it offered ways to measure the strength of leadership qualities and predict future performance. However, it was bedevilled by the fact that it is not easy to define traits or qualities of leadership that are actually those which people are born with as distinct from those they acquire or, for that matter, those which are applicable in all situations (that is, are universal characteristics of good leadership). The traits mentioned in Exhibit 10.1 below are qualities that research has indicated can be associated with good leadership performance, although none of these are necessarily those with which leaders are born.

One of the attractions of the approach was that it promised that good leadership would be guaranteed by selecting individuals with the appropriate positive traits for the role, but it also assumed that leaders are born more than they are made. But when transferred into the management context, the notion of the 'born leader' is difficult

to put into practice. Fundamentally, trait theory assumes that we cannot train managers to be leaders and the concept of leadership and management are inextricably separate activities, entailing different qualities. In many organizations, it also disguises how founders, who are often entrepreneurs, rise to lead companies using qualities that are far from those associated with great political leaders. As noted by Liz Fulop et al. (2004: 327; 1999: 162; also Dunford 1992a: 57):

> The interest in leadership traits developed as part of the personnel testing movement in the period immediately following the First World War. Wartime use of psychological testing for the selection of military personnel was followed by industrial applications of similar techniques. Leadership research developed as part of this (Stogdill 1974a). However, there is a notable lack of evidence for a certain trait or set of traits being universally appropriate in all situations (Stogdill 1974b; Spillane 1984). Even if it was accepted, for example, that Gandhi, the charismatic pacifist leader from India who in the 1940s led the independence movement, was a born leader, it is impossible to establish that his qualities would create effective leadership in another culture or society, or at another time.

However, Shelley Kirkpatrick and Edwin Locke (1991), in reviewing contemporary research on traits, found that certain traits do appear to have a consistent impact on leader effectiveness. These traits include those listed in Exhibit 10.1. Nevertheless, there is no fixed set or combination of traits that constitutes good leadership. The traits in Exhibit 10.1 can be found in a variety of mixes in effective leaders in practice and it is difficult to distinguish between some of them and acquired skills or behaviours. These theories fail to establish whether we are born with all these traits or whether some of them are attained through learning, experience and relationships. The assumption that leadership development tends to make is that we have a little of both – that the qualities of a good leader need the right training and discipline to blossom and mature, but it is necessary to have the right raw material.

Charles Manz and Henry Sims (1992: 310–11) suggested that a variation on the 'great man' model of leadership was that of the 'strong man'. Deliberately masculinist in its assumptions, this form of leadership was reserved exclusively for males. It glorified the tough, head-kicking image of authority in which the leader had superior strengths, skills and the courage to size up the situation, take decisive action and command the 'troops'. Reprimands (head-kicking or 'kick-ass') and punishment followed non-compliance by subordinates. The authors suggested that while this leadership approach might seem out of favour, there was still much evidence of it in corporate America (and no doubt elsewhere). Research continues to show that this macho construction of leadership is still common although often mixed with other popular accounts (see Chapter 1). One of the most celebrated forms of this is found in US business texts (and the media) focused on the self-made, entrepreneurial businessman encapsulated in the metaphor of a *gamesman*: dynamic and adventurous, flexible, competitive and willing to take risks in order to win at all costs (Holmberg and Strannegård 2005: 370).

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EXHIBIT 10.1
Common leader traits

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Drive
- high desire for achievement
- ambition to get ahead in work and career
- high level of energy

- tenacity or persistence in the right things
- initiative to change things and make things happen

Leadership motivation
- the desire to lead
- the willingness to assume responsibility
- the seeking of power as a means to achieve desired goals (*socialized power motive*) rather than as an end in itself (*personalized power motive*)

Honesty and integrity
- the correspondence between word and deed
- being trustworthy
- the foundation to attract and retain followers through gaining their trust

Self-confidence
- needed to withstand setbacks, persevere through hard times and lead others in new directions
- the ability to take hard decisions and stand by them
- managing the perceptions of others on self-confidence, and commanding their respect
- emotionally stable

Cognitive ability
- above-average intelligence to analyse situations accurately, solve problems effectively, and make suitable decisions
- not necessarily a genius, usually not
- managing the perceptions of others on intelligence

Knowledge of the business
- able to gather and assimilate extensive information about the company and industry
- necessary for developing suitable visions, strategies and business plans

SOURCE: Shelley Kirkpatrick and Edwin A. Locke (1991) 'Leadership: Do traits matter?', *Academy of Management Executive* **5**(2): 48–60.

Leadership style and behaviour[1]

Although there was some agreement by researchers on the broad family of traits that leaders were likely to possess, there was no stable group of traits which could be identified as characteristic of all leaders. If successful leaders could not therefore be identified through testing for traits, then research needed to focus on what leaders did and how, to determine desired leadership behaviours. Being a leader then became not a question of the leader's personal qualities, but how leaders behave.

Much of the research which took place between and after the two world wars showed a concern with whether leaders were dictatorial, exclusive and authoritarian in their approach, or consultative, inclusive and democratic/participative in style. While it is easy to oversimplify, authoritarian approaches were frequently associated with scientific management and the work-measurement approaches to management, while the human relations movement was often associated with the more participative styles of leadership because of its emphasis on interpersonal relations. Both cases are probably overstated, as more recent work on the labour process under both Taylorism and human relations regimes would suggest (see Chapters 2 and 11). Researchers in either camp were capable of assuming that one or the other style was the best, regardless of the circumstances. This tendency to dualistic thinking is not

confined to management thought, but this either/or logic has proved seductive to both scholars and practitioners, often to the detriment of theories which were not originally intended to be as black and white as they were interpreted.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

Reflecting on his experiences in management and not on any specific empirical research, and building on the work of Maslow (1987 and see Chapter 9) on motivation and self-actualization, Douglas McGregor (1960) argued that managers tended to hold one of two sets of assumptions about work and employees which were implicit in their leadership behaviours. McGregor argued that one could infer from certain managers' treatment of their employees that they believed that:

- The average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if possible.
- Because of this most people must be coerced, controlled, directed and threatened with punishment to put adequate effort into the achievement of organizational objectives.
- The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition and wants security above all (McGregor 1960: 33–4).

This set of assumptions, which McGregor termed *Theory X*, was, he believed, one of the major problems with US management practices of the time. By treating them as uncooperative, lacking in initiative, unimaginative and irresponsible, McGregor felt that US management was producing a workforce which was indeed uncooperative, lacking in initiative, unimaginative and irresponsible.

While McGregor acknowledged that Theory X might be acceptable in times of economic crisis and recession, he felt it was always a regressive style and that, under conditions of anything less than duress, management styles needed to display an awareness that workers wanted and needed more than wages, benefits and security and sought recognition and opportunities for self-improvement in their work. He termed the more progressive style *Theory Y* (McGregor 1960: 47–8):

- Work is as natural as rest or play.
- External control and threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort towards organizational objectives. People will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of objectives to which they are committed.
- Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
- The average human being learns under proper conditions not only to accept but to seek responsibility.
- The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
- In most work organizations, the abilities of most employees are only partially utilized.

Theory Y implies that problems of a lazy uncooperative workforce are not the problems of the workforce, which is what Theory X assumed, but the problems of management, and the management practices which made the workers that way. A Theory Y regime would be consultative with employees, seek and value their opinions and might even explore various forms of participative decision making. Rather than tight, external and measured controls, self-direction, autonomy and group control were recommended. McGregor was clear that a style of mutuality, which was participative, consultative and democratic was the one best way to manage in almost all circumstances.

Many managers easily identify with the Theory X and Y distinction and its normative view of 'good' and 'bad' leadership.

The Iowa studies

Where McGregor's position was more of a moral and philosophical one, empirically grounded studies of leadership style have focused, in one way or another, on whether leaders behave as though they are concerned more with task accomplishment (often associated with Theory X) and concern for subordinates (often associated with Theory Y) rather than questioning leaders' motivational assumptions.

From the late 1930s, and throughout the 1940s and 1950s, three influential bodies of research appeared. The earliest, the University of Iowa Studies, identified three leadership styles – autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire – from research in boys' clubs. The studies were led by Kurt Lewin, with Ronald Lippitt and Ralph White (Lewin et al. 1939). These styles were characterized by the following behaviours:

- *Autocratic* (Directive)
  - Centralizes authority
  - Dictates work methods
  - Limits employee participation
  - Makes and imposes unilateral decisions
- *Democratic* (Consultative or Participative)
  - Involves employees in decision making
  - Delegates authority
  - Encourages participation in deciding work methods and goals
  - Uses feedback as opportunity to coach employees
  - Participation sometimes results in higher satisfaction
  - Greater decision acceptance sometimes
- *Laissez-faire*
  - Gives employees complete freedom to take decisions and complete their work in their own way
  - Provides materials and resources and answers employees' questions

While the studies found that there was no difference in the quantity of work produced by democratic and autocratic groups, the quality and reported satisfaction was higher for the democratic groups. Once having experienced either democratic or autocratic leadership, however, groups found it difficult to adapt to a laissez-faire style. Subsequent studies found that the methodology significantly affected the findings, focused on perceptions of behaviour and feelings of satisfaction, rather than observations of performance, and ignored situation variables. The studies, as did the Ohio and Michigan studies that followed, looked at transactions, which given that they were supported and encouraged by the military, is entirely predictable. The military bureaucracy needed findings that told them how to keep the machine running smoothly, which wasn't quite what they got, but a balance of autocracy with a bit of consultation was sufficient.

The Ohio State studies

At Ohio State University, a team led by Edwin A. Fleishman (1951, 1957; Fleishman et al. 1955) developed two instruments – the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) for employees and the Leader (or Supervisor) Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ) for managers. Not exactly state-of-the-art, as Bill Starbuck (1996) observed, as its two core concepts 'Initiating Structure' and 'Consideration' were embodiments of the leadership concepts of 1910 and the 1930s. The manager

concerned with initiating structure was at best a good results-oriented but routine bureaucrat, at worst an obsessive and interfering micro-manager. The manager concerned with consideration involved more people in the process, listened to them and acted on their suggestions, and created a good, supportive and collaborative work atmosphere with high morale. Again questions were raised about the reliability and validity of the instruments, the lack of consideration of context, their cultural bias, and the associated laboratory studies that were often conducted with small numbers of students performing simplified tasks in an artificial context. But the two-factor model emerged so strongly from these essentially transactional studies that it still shapes much leadership thinking, and a great deal of managerial behaviour.

The Michigan studies

At the University of Michigan, teams led by Daniel Katz and involving Rensis Likert pursued very similar programmes to those at Ohio, and came up with a two factor system, with 'Production Centred' and 'Employee Centred' as their dimensions. It added little to the Ohio view, except that it seemed more straightforward and the results tended to come out in favour of the employee-centred view. Later Likert (1961, 1967, 1979) developed a combination of the Michigan and Iowa criteria in his *System 4 Approach*:

- *System 1 Exploitative authoritative*: where leadership is autocratic, incorporating punishment-centred motivation, minimal delegation, minimal information provision to subordinates and decision making by edict.
- *System 2 Benevolent authoritative*: use of rewards to motivate but no less centralization of decision making than in System 1.
- *System 3 Consultative*: subordinates are consulted over decisions; some trust and teamwork exist.
- *System 4 Participative*: high level of trust and confidence; decision making through participation; communication/information flows upwards, downwards and laterally.

Likert developed his model by surveying (he gave his name to the eponymous Likert scale) over two hundred organizations in an attempt to isolate their performance characteristics. Later he used his classification to look at a broad range of organizational activities, including leadership, motivation, communication, interaction and influence, decision making, goal setting and control processes. He surveyed several hundred managers and claimed to have found that the least productive departments or units equated with Systems 1 and 2, and the more productive with Systems 3 and 4. A participative style of leadership (that is, System 4) was found to be superior in terms of high productivity and quality and fostering loyalty and cooperation among subordinates (Mullins 1985: 149). System 4 is another version of the 'one best way' approach to leadership and is very similar in concept to Theory Y. Systems 1 and 2 leaderships bear some relationship to Theory X. However, like all the behavioural studies, the reliance on survey reports of past behaviour rather than observations of actual behaviour, and the lack of consideration of context is a major weakness.

Blake's grid

A widely used approach (in more arenas than simply work performance), which focuses on style and uses an extended version of the production/employee-centred theme, is the *leadership grid approach* developed initially by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1978). This was subsequently refined by Blake and Anne McCanse (1991). It was devised with management training in mind and easily adapted to take them

through a series of stages towards the most effective leadership style. This style (9, 9 in Figure 10.1) involves maximizing concern for both production and people, with these two factors being seen as interdependent, rather than being treated as independent (or as separate dimensions), as they were in the Ohio studies and Theory X and Theory Y (Dunford 1992a: 59; Fulop et al. 1999:167; Fulop et al. 2004: 331).

Blake and Mouton's management grid, originally developed in the 1960s, identified four factors, while the Blake and McCanse version identifies five basic combinations of concern for people and concern for production, using a scale of 1–9 for each factor. These five factors are described in Figure 10.1.
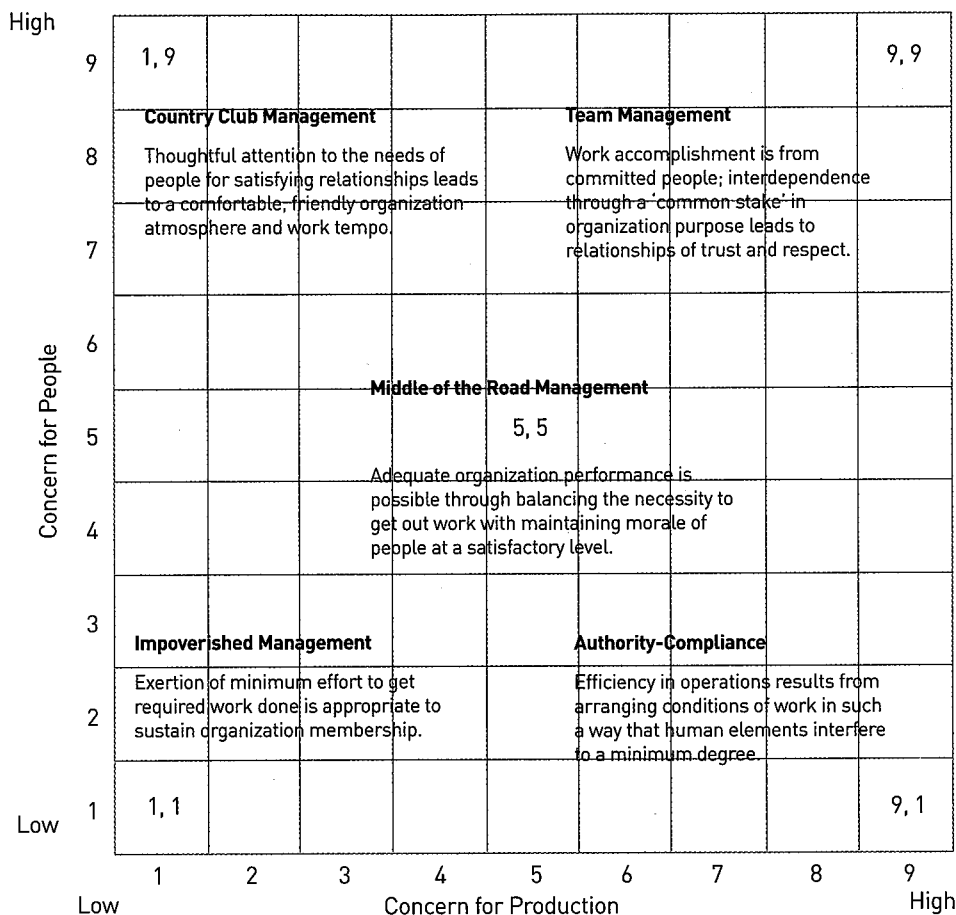

Figure 10.1 The leadership grid

The leadership grid approach, with its arguments in favour of the team management style, fitted in well with the human relations notion that productivity and satisfaction could be mutually optimized. However, empirical support for the universal application of their model is at best mixed for those who subscribed to this approach (see for example Larson et al. 1976; Bryman 1986). Furthermore, Blake and Mouton, in advocating a preferred leadership style in all situations, also espoused 'one best way' to manage or lead.

Contingency approaches: from 'one best way' to 'best fit'

The approaches we have discussed so far are problematic insofar as they concentrate to the point of obsession on variations in the styles of leaders – and these variations are seen as being atemporal and universal. Thus they fail to take into account the possibility of the significance of the *situation* or *context* in which the leader is operating. In attempting to overcome this inadequacy, contingency approaches to leadership seek to systematize the relationship between situation and leadership style. That is, they attempt to identify particular contextual situations and determine the style of leadership most appropriate for each. Nevertheless, *contingency theory* is normative, as it is based on the assumption that for a given situation there will be one identifiably best leadership style.

Matching leader and situation[2]

The classic contingency study is that of Fred Fiedler (1967, 1974). His contingency theory involves the identification of leaders as either *relationship-centred* or *task-centred*, thus continuing the duality of styles present in the previous style studies. However, in Fiedler's schema no style is best under all circumstances, and he adopted a controversial methodology to explore it. An individual's leadership style is assessed on the basis of the *Least-preferred Co-worker* (LPC) scale or coefficient. This involves the individual thinking of the person that he or she least enjoyed working with and then characterizing him or her in terms of a set of bipolar adjectives, for example 'pleasant–unpleasant', 'friendly–unfriendly'. On the basis of an individual's answers on the LPC scale, he or she is characterized as relationship- or task-oriented.

Fiedler argued that a low LPC score, for example, indicated that the person, when given the choice, would opt for getting the job done rather than worrying about developing good interpersonal relations. A relationship-motivated or high LPC leader accomplishes tasks through good interpersonal relations and in situations that involve a whole group performing tasks. The relationship-motivated leader may perform poorly under pressure or stress because of his or her propensity to pay attention to interpersonal relations rather than the task. Alternatively, the task-motivated or low LPC leader is strongly committed to completing the task through adopting clear, standardized procedures and a no-nonsense attitude to getting the job done. Under pressure or when the situation is out of control, the task-motivated leader will put the task ahead of the group's feelings and pursue its accomplishment at all costs (Fiedler et al. 1976: 6–11).

The situation determining leadership style is analysed in terms of three aspects: *leader–member relations, task structure* and *leader's position power*. Leader–member relations refers to how well leaders get on with their subordinates, how well they are respected or trusted. Task structure is a measure of how clearly the task is specified (for example highly structured and detailed). The leader's position power is a measure of the formal authority of leaders and their capacity to exercise authority through rewards or punishments. Collectively, these three factors are termed the 'favourability' of the situation'. In the most favourable situations there is little need for relationship-focused activities, since relationships are already good. In this situation, the task-centred leader performs best. On the other hand, in an unfavourable situation, the relationship-centred leader may give insufficient attention to task-related problems. In this situation, the task-motivated leader also comes to the fore. The task-oriented leader operates best at these extremes. In the 'middle', that is, where the situation is moderately favourable and the external pressures are not so pronounced, the skills of the relationship-centred leader come into their own in providing the drive and energy for action through activating the personal motivations of the group (see Figure 10.2).
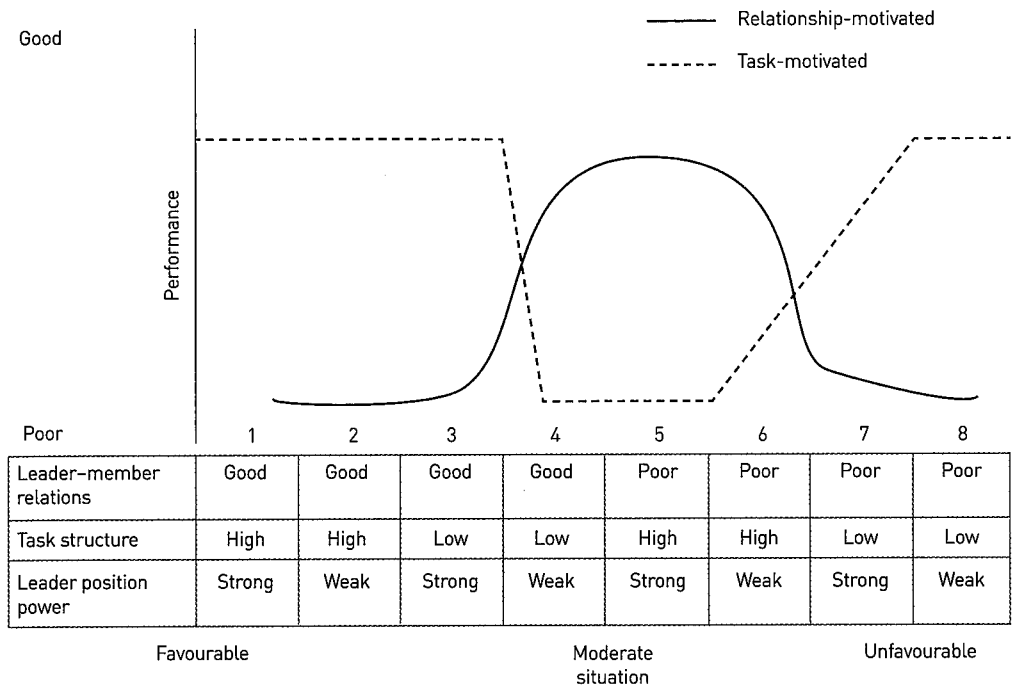
Figure 10.2 The performance of relationship- and task-motivated leaders in different situational-favourable conditions

SOURCE: Fred E. Fiedler (1974) 'The contingency model – new directions for leadership utlisation'. *Journal of Contemporary Business* **3** (Autumn), p. 71.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Leader–member relations	Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Task structure	High	High	Low	Low	High	High	Low	Low
Leader position power	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak

Favourable   Moderate situation   Unfavourable

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Unlike the stance taken by theorists such as Likert or Blake and Mouton, Fiedler is not confident that a person's leadership style can be changed by training. In effect, if you have to change the task, you are more likely to get results by also changing the leader or the situational conditions (Fiedler et al. 1976). Leader–member relations might, for example, be changed through such things as increasing informal or social interaction with subordinates or showing greater appreciation for their efforts. Task structure might be modified by such things as delegating more (or less) decision making to subordinates. Position power can be altered by such strategies as giving more (or less) authority to subordinates or by increasing (or decreasing) subordinates' access to information.

Despite its classic status, Fiedler's study has been subject to considerable criticism. This includes the claims that the LPC measure corresponds poorly with subordinates' accounts of leader behaviour; that the LPC score for an individual often varies over time; and that there has been a failure to replicate results (Bryman 1985, 1986). However, Fiedler disputes these criticisms, arguing that the LPC score is 'a highly reliable and surprisingly stable measure' (Fiedler and Garcia 1987: 79) and that the weight of evidence clearly attests to the validity of the model (Fiedler and Garcia 1987: 86–93). Some organizational behaviour texts do note that there has been some dispute over the validity of Fiedler's approach (Stoner et al. 1985; Hellreigel et al. 1986), but others simply treat it as an uncontested classic study (Hunsaker and Cook 1986).

Path–goal theory

Path–goal theory, developed by Robert House (1971) and others (Evans 1970), proposes that leaders can affect the job satisfaction, motivation and performance of group members by their actions. One way is to make rewards dependent on the

meeting of performance goals, but the leader can also help the subordinates to achieve these goals by outlining the paths towards the goals and by removing obstacles in their way. This may entail the leader adopting different styles of leadership according to the situation. The theory identifies four different types of behaviour:

1. *Directive leadership* – giving specific guidance to subordinates and asking them to follow standard rules and regulations. Shows low consideration for people, but high regard for task and structure.
2. *Supportive leadership* – includes being friendly to subordinates and sensitive to their needs. Shows high consideration for people and low regard for task and structure.
3. *Participative leadership* – involves sharing information with subordinates and consulting with them before making decisions. Shows high concern for both structure and consideration.
4. *Achievement-oriented leadership* – entails setting challenging goals and emphasizing excellence while simultaneously showing confidence that subordinates will perform well. It does not really involve subordinates, so it is not that high on consideration in that sense – in fact, it has some similarities with the more positive features of scientific management.

House argues that all four styles can be, and often are, used by a leader in varying situations, or as a situation unfolds, and among his research subjects have been US presidents, who have to influence a wide variety of people. The theory has put forward a number of propositions on what behaviours suit what type of situation, including:

■ *Ambiguous situations* benefit from directive behaviour. Subordinates appreciate their superior's help in increasing the probability that they will be able to attain the desired reward. Where situations have greater clarity in the nature of the task or the goal, this will be less necessary.
■ *Stressful situations* benefit from supportive leader behaviour which alleviates subordinate tension and dissatisfaction.

The existing research on path–goal theory tends to support these propositions, which are clearly consistent with earlier theories and, one might add, with common sense. It has been argued that one of the strengths of this theory is its attempt to link leader behaviour with theories of motivation. Indeed, much of this behaviour would be familiar to a coach trying to get the best out of a team. Yet much of what is implicit in the theory relies on taken-for-granted assumptions about power and organizational politics. For example, sharing information under participative leadership might not occur for political reasons rather than because of a style issue. Even when it is shared, the information may even be misinformation or partial information for precisely the same reasons. Given that much of House's research was conducted in the White House, events in both the 1970s (Watergate) and the 1990s (Monica Lewinsky) suggest that leader behaviour may serve a number of simultaneous purposes – and events of the 1980s (the Iran–Contra scandal) suggest that when they do communicate they may not apparently remember what they said nor why!

Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory

Originally called the *vertical dyad linkage model of leadership*, this theory was developed by George Graen and his colleagues (Dansereau et al. 1975; Graen and Schiemann 1978; Liden and Graen 1980). Graen et al. question the conventional view that leaders display the same style and behaviours towards all their subordinates. On the contrary, they argue, there is no 'average' leadership style. Just take your own experience of work or school – can you think of one boss or teacher that everyone

liked, or by whom everyone felt that they were treated the same? Such equitable treatment is hard to achieve, and leaders are only human – the nature of their tasks and their own personal preferences will mean that they interact with some people more than others. Graen et al. argue that leaders behave somewhat differently towards each subordinate, and the resulting linkages or relationships between the leader and a subordinate (*the dyad*) are likely to differ in quality. The same superior might have poor interpersonal relations with some subordinates but fairly open and trusting relations with others. Graen et al. argue that these patterns of relations fall into two groups, being dependent on whether the subordinate is 'in' or 'out'. Members of the *in-group* are invited to share in decision making and are given added responsibility, and are often taken into the manager's confidence. Members of the *out-group*, however, are supervised within the narrow terms of their formal employment contract, and managed on a 'need-to-know' basis. The trusted 'right hands' in the in-group tend to find their jobs enriched and their personal development accelerated, while the 'hired hands' in the out-group have limited opportunities and display low satisfaction and higher turnover.

Leaders and in-group members tend to believe that competence is the major reason why they are members of that group, but out-group members argue that it is ingratiation, favouritism and politics (Aktouf 1996). Interpersonal attraction certainly must be important, and research has demonstrated that in-group members tend to see problems in the same way as their leader. This may be an indication that leaders prefer people to be like them, which has its own dangers of 'groupthink' and the 'yes-man' (*sic*) mentality. As initially indicated by the Hawthorne Studies, once people are separated into high-performing and low-performing groups, this tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and people become high or low performing accordingly, but favouritism can also lead to people being promoted beyond their competence. Omar Aktouf (1996), in a study conducted on both capitalist and communist workplace relations, argues that although supervisors report competence as a criterion for promotion and preferment, it is impression-management that seems to be most important in practice.

Graen et al. have undertaken research on the model in Confucian cultures, where society is based on concentric circles of intimacy and favouritism from the family outwards. Despite the social background of several circles, in practice the in-group/out-group dualism is common where the patriarchal leadership style prevails. Research has not yet been done on the gender dimensions of this theory, but one would expect it to display close links to the 'glass ceiling' concept of limits to women's progress in organizations (see Chapter 2).

LMX continues to enjoy popularity but researchers are now applying cross-paradigmatic approaches to the study: for example, Fairhurst (2007: Chapter 6) examines the LMX as a discursive project of leadership. She does this by looking at different discourse as narrative, in this case storytelling, and the variants of this, to see how this can give us a deeper understanding of how the LMX dialogue is socially constructed. She also looks at the discourse of LMX to understand the ways in which its methodology privileges the voices of leaders and members in different ways.

Leaders and followers: Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership

One characteristic of an effective leader is, according to Warren Bennis (1985), the ability to *manage* and *communicate meaning* to ensure that those leading can capture the imaginations of others and align these behind the organizational goals and priorities. Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard (1996; Hersey 1985) developed their *situational leadership model* to enable a better understanding of how to achieve this,

focusing on the 'actual behaviour' of leaders rather than their 'values or orientations', as in other approaches. Their approach to leadership has two basic assumptions:

1. *What leaders do to* people is more important than what they intend to do, that is, leaders are judged and assessed by others on their behaviours not their attitudes (for this reason, it is important to explore the various behaviours that leaders can adopt).
2. *What leaders do to others* must be task-specific, that is, leadership effectiveness depends on the ability to influence individuals and what they are doing.

Let us consider the implications of both of these assumptions for leadership effectiveness. The first part of the discussion relates to the behaviours which leaders can adopt when attempting to influence the performance of others. Hersey and Blanchard suggest that there are two distinctive sets of behaviours which you use when leading others – *directive* and *supportive behaviour.*

Directive behaviour

This behaviour relates to the extent to which leaders show or tell people what to do, how to do it and where and when to do it, and then closely supervise those people's performance. A leader has a choice, in any given situation, to use a lot or very little of this behaviour. For example, *highly* directive: 'I want you to take the hammer in the right hand, hold the nail with the left hand, and when I nod my head, hit it with the hammer as hard as you can' – in which case the instructions must be clear and non-ambiguous – or *low* directive: 'You decide what will work best in this situation to achieve the given objective.'

Supportive behaviour

This represents the extent to which you encourage and praise people and facilitate involvement in problem solving and decision making by seeking their ideas and opinions and listening actively to their responses. A leader, again, has a choice as to how much support is offered. For example, *highly* supportive: 'What do you need to tackle this problem – how can I help you get the best result?', or *low* supportive: 'Just get it right, or else.'

Hersey and Blanchard subsequently defined four leadership styles which are the combinations of high and low directive and supportive behaviours as described in Figure 10.3.
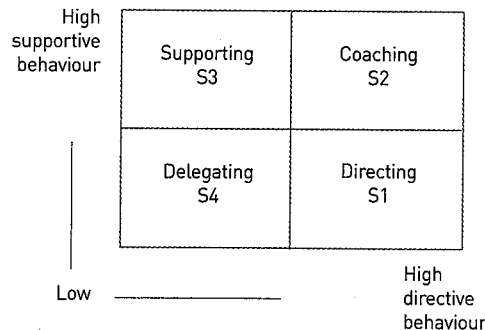

Figure 10.3 Hersey and Blanchard's leadership styles

SOURCE: Adapted from Blanchard et al. (1985). Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. Copyright © Kenneth Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi 1985.

They labelled these styles S1 to S4 and suggested that whenever leaders encountered situations where it was necessary to influence another's performance, they always had four possible approaches (Blanchard et al. 1985: 56). These approaches are:

- *S1 directing* – providing structure and control
- *S2 coaching* – providing direction and support
- *S3 supporting* – praising, listening and facilitating
- *S4 delegating* – turning over responsibility for day-to-day decision making.

Task specificity

The skill of effective leadership is to know the characteristics of the situation wherein the various styles are likely to work most effectively. Hersey and Blanchard also concluded that two critical aspects of the follower (the person being influenced) are important determinants of leadership effectiveness and that for all followers, these characteristics are task-specific. They coined the term *development level* and suggested that it has two elements:

1. *competence* – the extent to which the person, for a particular task, possesses the knowledge and skills which could be gained from education, training and/or experience
2. *commitment* – the extent to which the person possesses the confidence and motivation to do the task.

Hersey and Blanchard suggested that the four leadership styles relate to four different development levels, being various combinations of competence and commitment, which they defined as:

- *D1 Enthusiastic beginners*: Characteristic of people who lack competence, but are enthusiastic and committed. The authors suggested that such people need direction and supervision to get them going (S1).
- *D2 Disillusioned learners*: Characteristic of people who have some competence but lack commitment (having become disillusioned about their ability to achieve outcomes). The authors suggested that such people need direction for their lack of total competence but also support to rebuild their enthusiasm and self-esteem (S2).
- *D3 Reluctant contributors*: Characteristic of people who actually have the competence to do a task but lack confidence and/or motivation actually to attempt the task. It is suggested that rather than needing to be told how to perform, these people need support and encouragement to raise their flagging commitment (S3).
- *D4 Peak performer*: Characteristic of people who are both competent and committed to achieving a particular task. Such people need only the opportunity to perform (S4).

The resulting model is illustrated in Figure 10.4 (Blanchard et al. 1985). It suggests several important things:

- individuals' development levels change in a more or less 'typical' pattern which follows the increase in levels of competence
- for different tasks people may or will have different levels of development
- effective leaders match their leadership, for each task, to the development level of their followers
- effective leaders recognize the 'development cycle of individuals learning a task' and therefore vary their leadership style to meet the followers' need.

The management of meaning for the leader becomes a task of understanding:

- what goal is to be achieved
- what tasks must be undertaken to achieve this goal
- who will be undertaking these tasks
- what their development level is for each task
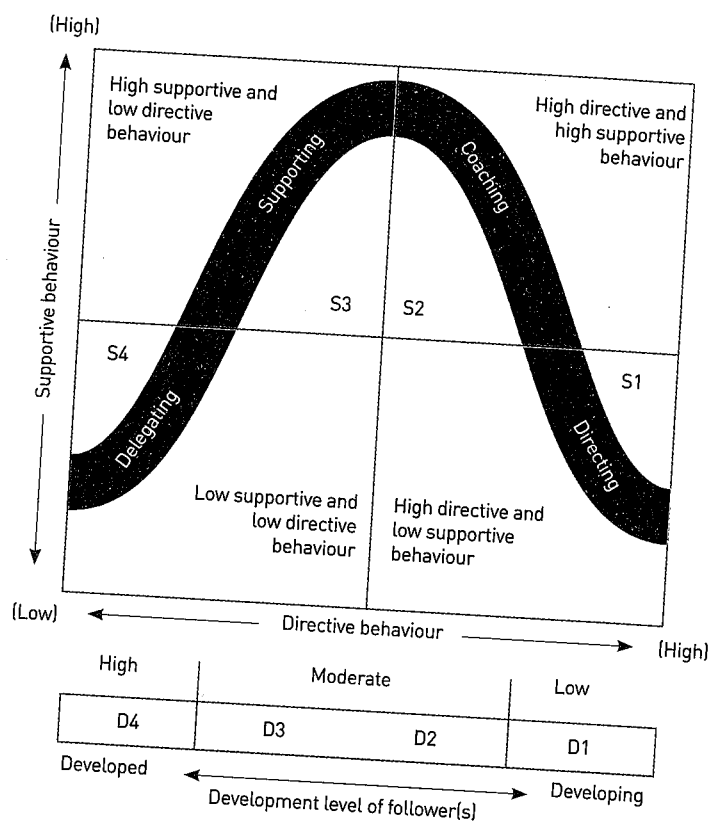- what leadership style is thus appropriate.

Figure 10.4 The four leadership styles

SOURCE: Kenneth Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi (1985) *Leadership and the One-Minute Manager*, London: HarperCollins, p. 69.

The main features of the contingency approaches we have discussed are summarized in Table 10.1. The importance of these theories was to show the variability and complexity of leadership situations and the problems of adopting a 'one best way' to lead or manage.

Contingency theorists have been criticized on a number of points, there being two main criticisms. First, the theories do not present a cumulative set of ideas, with each one seeming to choose different variables (or contingency factors) to explain or build the theory. Often the choice of the variables, such as 'supportive' and 'directive' behaviour, as in the case of Hersey and Blanchard, is not sufficiently well explained or justified but it does equate leadership with influence. Contingency theorists seem to amass a range of factors that can leave the manager overwhelmed and unclear about which factors are the important ones to consider (Barrett and Sutcliffe 1992: 12). Second, the contingency factors are not related to or explained in terms of such things as organization structure, technology, size or other dimensions that are also likely to impact on leadership processes

(Barrett and Sutcliffe 1992: 12). There is a decided disconnect between leadership, which is still seen in terms of one person, instead of as part of 'an organizing process grounded in task accomplishment' (Fairhurst 2007: 13, citing Fairhurst 2006).

Table 10.1 Comparison of major contingency leadership models

Model	Leader behaviour	Situational variables	Outcomes/criteria
Fiedler's contingency model	Task-oriented (low LPC) Relationship-oriented (high LPC)	Leader–member relations Task structure Position power	Performance
Path–goal theory	Directive Supportive Participative Achievement-oriented	Task structure Subordinate characteristics	Satisfaction Motivation Performance
Vertical dyad linkage	Differential treatment of subordinates (in-group or out-group)	Subordinate competence Subordinate loyalty	Satisfaction Performance Turnover
Hersey–Blanchard's situational leadership	Concern for people (directive or supportive) Concern for task (competence and commitment)	Developmental levels of subordinates (D1, D2, D3, D4)	Effectiveness

Source: Modified from Robert Vecchio, Greg Hearn and Greg Southey (1996) *Organizational Behaviour*, Sydney, NSW: Harcourt Brace, p. 497.

Leadership substitutes[3]

Contingency approaches assume that there is no one right style for all situations, but they also assume that there is a right one for a particular situation: it is assumed that leadership style is important. This is questioned by Steven Kerr and John Jermier (1978), who argue that leadership is sometimes not important because of the existence of leadership *substitutes or neutralizers*. Table 10.2 summarizes the Kerr and Jermier model based on subsequent research by Jon Howell et al. (1990) whose model included the concept of *enhancers*.

A *leadership substitute* is something that by its presence makes the behaviour unnecessary: for example, employees with a strong attachment to a profession are likely to develop horizontal relationships inside and/or outside their organization, thereby making any leadership style less relevant. Highly trained and educated individuals are more likely to be self-directed and seek autonomy, minimizing the importance of leadership. Experience on the job can also reduce the need for leadership. To the extent that professional peer assessment is important, such as in professions like medicine, the significance of the organizational leader's role is reduced, if not removed in some circumstances.

A *leadership neutralizer* is something that by its absence prevents the leadership behaviour from being important: for example, to the extent that the employee is indifferent towards the rewards that the organization is able to provide, any type of leader loses significance. On the other hand, organizations might look for leadership substitutes if they believe leaders are not performing well and cannot be retrained, removed, transferred or their position redefined. This could be the situation, for example, facing organizations in which a family member has been appointed to management. Leadership neutralizers include such things as removing rewards from the control of leaders or managers so that promotion and so on is not influenced by them. Others are listed in Table 10.2.

Leadership enhancers amplify the impact a leader has on employees, such as altering reward systems. Leadership enhancers increase the influence of leaders, while neutralizers are deliberate strategies used to create 'power vacuums' (Howell et al. 1990: 30–4). Leadership substitutes are difficult to overcome and often lie outside the control of management yet are recognized as important influences on the changing role of leadership in organizations.

Table 10.2 *Leadership substitutes, neutralizers and enhancers: eleven managerial leadership problems and effective coping strategies**

Leadership problems	Enhancer/Neutralizer	Substitutes
Leader doesn't keep on top of details in the department; coordination among subordinates is difficult	Not useful	Develop self-managed work teams; encourage team members to interact within and across departments
Competent leadership is resisted through non-compliance or passive resistance	**Enhancers:** increase employees' dependence on leader through greater leader control of rewards/resources; increase their perception of leader's influence outside of work group	Develop collegial systems of guidance for decision making
Leader doesn't provide support or recognition for jobs well done	Not useful	Develop a reward system that operates independently of the leader. Enrich jobs to make them inherently satisfying
Leader doesn't set targets or goals, or clarify roles for employees	Not useful	Emphasize experience and ability in selecting subordinates. Establish group goal-setting. Develop an organizational culture that stresses high performance expectations
A leader behaves inconsistently over time	**Enhancers:** these are dysfunctional **Neutralizer:** remove rewards from leader's control	Develop group goal-setting and group rewards
An upper-level manager regularly bypasses a leader in dealing with employees, or countermands the leader's directions	**Enhancers:** increase leader's control over rewards and resources; build leader's image via in-house champion or visible 'important' responsibilities **Neutralizer:** physically distance subordinates from upper-level managers	Increase the professionalization of employees
A unit is in disarray or out of control	Not useful	Develop highly formalized plans, goals, routines and areas of responsibility
Leadership is brutal, autocratic	**Enhancers:** these are dysfunctional **Neutralizers:** physically distance subordinates; remove rewards from leader's control	Establish group goal-setting and peer performance appraisal
There is inconsistency across different organizational units	Not useful	Increase formalization. Set up a behaviourally focused reward system
Leadership is unstable over time, leaders are rotated and/or leave office frequently	Not useful	Establish competent advisory staff units. Increase professionalism of employees
Incumbent management is poor; there's no heir apparent	**Enhancers:** these are dysfunctional **Neutralizer:** assign non-leader duties to problem managers	Emphasize experience and ability in selecting employees. Give employees more training

Source: Howell et al. (1990) 'Substitutes for leadership: Effective alternatives to ineffective leadership', *Organizational Dynamics*, summer, pp. 28–9.

* The suggested solutions are examples of many possibilities for each problem.

Kerr and Jermier see their approach as 'a true situational theory of leadership' (1978: 401), in that it is based on the argument that in some situations the role of the leader is replaced by alternative mechanisms. Effective leadership is correspondingly treated as 'the ability to supply subordinates with needed guidance and good feelings which are not being supplied by other sources' (Kerr and Jermier 1978: 400). One of the criticisms made against Kerr and Jermier's approach is that rather than acting as substitutes or neutralizers, such factors are supplements to leadership, that is, they coexist, 'filling in for one another as the situation dictates' (Howell and Dorfman 1981: 728). Thus the point is made that leadership is merely one factor at play in the determination of organizational outcomes. This theoretical approach did not influence researchers as much as others because it effectively played down the importance of leadership, going against the tide of most mainstream theorizing.

Transformational leadership and heroics[4]

Perhaps one of the most influential ideas in mainstream management theory is that of transformational leadership. In particular, the US management literature of the 1980s and early 1990s argued for the virtues of transformational leadership, which gives a high priority to the idea of visionary leadership (Bass 1985; Tichy and Devanna 1986; Kouzes and Posner 1989). Transformational leadership involves a focus on change and the importance of developing a sense of direction and commitment by a leader. Exhibit 10.2 presents a summary of the characteristics of transformational leadership.

EXHIBIT 10.2
Transformational leadership

1. **Visioning a new corporate future**
   - creating the new vision
   - breaking the old frame
   - demonstrating personal commitment to the vision

2. **Communicating the vision**
   - communicating and dramatizing the vision
   - focusing on people
   - seizing the moment

3. **Implementing the vision**
   - building an effective top team
   - reorganizing
   - building a new culture

SOURCE: Dexter Dunphy and Doug Stace (1990) *Under New Management: Australian Organisations in Transition*, Sydney, NSW: McGraw-Hill, p. 155.

Transformational leadership is typically contrasted with *transactional leadership*, which focuses on leadership being essentially a matter of supporting, directing and coordinating work or effort towards a known goal or purpose. Transactional leadership is not focused on initiating radical or dramatic change but rather fine-tuning what goes on in the organization. In Figure 10.5 Noel Tichy and David Ulrich (1987: 299) illustrate how transactional leadership can stop short of what an organization needs in attempting to change. Moving along from the trigger events on the diagram,

the bottom half represents the emotional reactions to what is happening in the top half. Once there is a perceived need for change, which could be a marked decline in sales, for example, key leaders will try to initiate change and will encounter resistant forces; technical obstacles, political obstacles from powerful pressure groups within the organization, and cultural obstacles from people who cannot think differently. Emotionally, they are disengaged and disenchanted because the old ways have to end. When they move into the transition state, transactional leaders tend to stick with technical solutions to problems or incremental change because they have no alternative vision. However, what the organization needs is not just death and disintegration, but a way of seeing endings as new beginnings, a vision to enable rebirth. Transformational leaders are able to create a new technical, political and cultural vision, mobilize commitment to the vision on these levels and institutionalize the changes on these levels so that there is no turning back. The revitalized organization finds new energy, stops replaying old scripts and embraces new ones. Thus the key skills of transformational leaders are not just in visioning, but in making things happen at all levels, and at times it can require close hands-on involvement to drive through. The transformational leadership approach is said to be needed in situations of organizational crisis. A key role for the leader is to define organizational reality so that they can win the 'hearts' and 'minds' and even the 'souls' of followers who will then perform beyond expectations. This reinforces the view that transformational leadership is about charisma, inspirational performance, stimulation and individual focus (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005: 52).
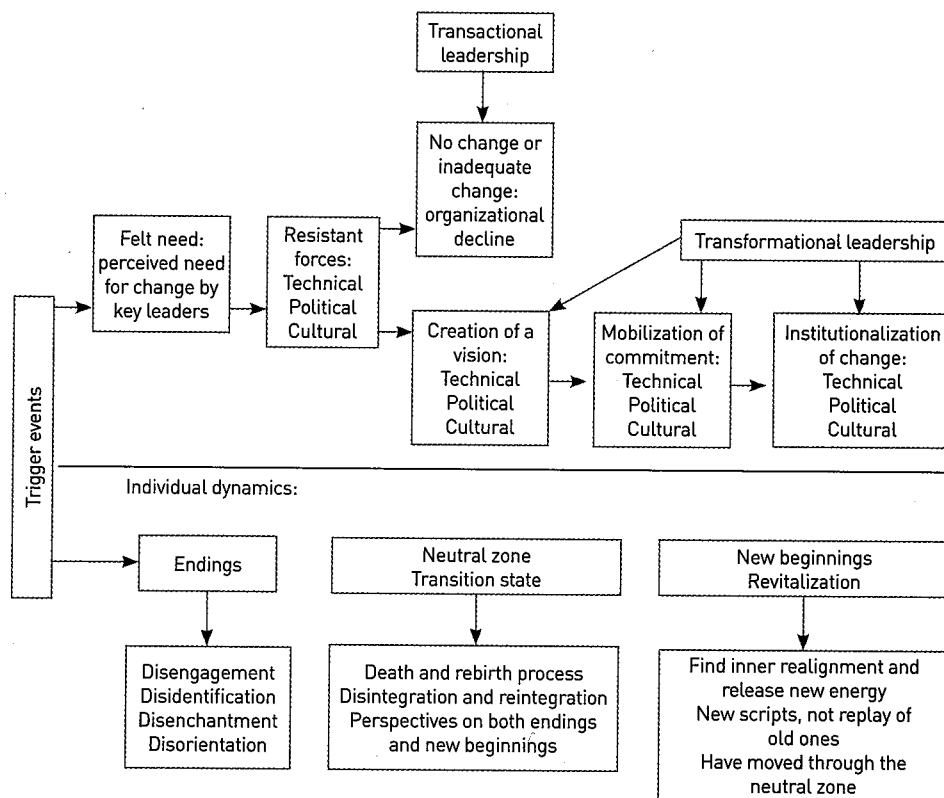

Figure 10.5 Transformational leadership

SOURCE: Noel Tichy and David Ulrich (1987) 'The leadership challenge: A call for the transformational leader', in A.D. Timpe (ed.) *Leadership*, New York: Facts on File Publications, p. 29.

Criticisms of the transformational leadership approach have focused on such things as the excessive, almost evangelical role accorded the transformational leader, who almost single-handedly has the vision to steer (as a captain would) the organization through turbulent change and crisis. Transformational leadership theorists have also propagated the view, or at least reinforced it, that leadership and management are separate activities. Thus they have indirectly reaffirmed the trait theory of leadership. To 'qualify' as a transformational leader is to be equivalent to the 'great man' model that was edified by the early trait theorists. Whereas the leadership-style theorists subscribed to a view that managers could be trained as leaders, and contingency theorists argued that situations determined appropriate leadership approaches, the transformational leadership is based on the notion of exaggerated agency (Fairhurst 2007: 24). The transformational versus transactional split suggests that one form of leadership, in fact the lesser and inferior one, is about task accomplishment while the other is not. Thus, heroic leadership can only be the attribute of a few dynamic, charismatic male individuals and the model is supposed to work in all settings and contexts where change is the norm (Barrett and Sutcliffe 1993: 22).

Transformational approach has been largely based on observations of top managers and CEOs in the USA and not middle and other levels of management thus reinforcing the importance of *distant (distal) leadership* as opposed to *close* or *nearby(proximal) leadership* that includes supervisors and other levels of management (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005: 53, citing Shamir 1995). The transformational leadership approach has drawn support for its claims from data collected through the interview method, based on the perceptions that followers have of the attributes of the leader. Research has found that the ratings transformational leaders give of their attributes tend to correlate with those given by their subordinates or followers (for example Hater and Bass 1988). John Coopey says that if we substitute the words 'transformational leadership' with 'a drive or need for power', then these findings on transformational leadership can be seen in a very different light. He says that research using projective tests (special tests to determine dimensions of personality) suggests that people in leadership positions crave power or have a higher need for power than do others (Coopey 1995: 207, citing Shackleton and Fletcher 1984). Those who have a strong, lifelong desire for power, which can include men or women, which is reinforced through their socialization (that is, how they learn and behave in school, the family and the wider community), usually also have a strong lifelong hunger for acceptance and confirmation (Coopey 1995: 207, citing Kets de Vries 1991). Whatever other skills, attributes or abilities these people have, it is their high need for power that sets them apart. Conversely, followers oblige this type of leader by a process of 'idealized transference', in which the followers make every effort to please the leader to compensate for their own sense of helplessness and vulnerability in the relationship. Coopey adds that unless leaders of this type are sufficiently self-reflexive and able to distance themselves from this adulation, they are likely to mirror the adulation and come to believe in their own 'greatness' (Coopey 1995: 207). It is not surprising then that there are strong correlations between the perceptions of followers and transformational leaders about attributes and qualities of leadership.

Research on *romanticizing leadership* has also theorized that that high follower–leader distance is conducive to and possibly the only situation under which leaders can maintain a simplified and magical image of themselves that incites follower worship (Bligh and Schyns 2007, citing Collinson 2005: 237). Romanticizing leadership is likely to increase as the gap between leaders and their followers also increases, such as we see today with the huge salary differences, and hence lifestyles, and privileges, between CEOs compared with their managers (see Introduction).

Under such conditions, leaders can invoke positive attributions of their performance through clever impression-management, visionary rhetoric and behaviour accompanied by a selective focus on particular performance cues, such as noted above in relation to the imperatives for change (Bligh and Schyns 2007, citing Shamir 1995). Some versions of transformational leadership have focused attention on the joint construction of leader–follower identities based on a dramaturgical model of charismatic leadership where the impression management tactics of leaders and followers create socially constructed labels of leadership that can be easily switched or altered as relationships change (Lührmann and Eberl 2007, citing Gardner and Avolio 1998; Sosik et al. 2002).

The transformational leadership approach continues to be used in leadership studies but not without problems. Research by Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe and John Alban-Metcalfe (2005) on transformational leadership qualities and competencies in the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK did not support the notion of charisma and heroics that is prevalent in the US literature. Part of the explanation for this was that their study used a close or nearby approach and included a range of leadership levels as well as gender representation as distinct from the distant leadership approach used by US researchers. They found that the *leader as servant* more aptly characterized how leadership in the NHS was framed by respondents in terms of managing change and enhancing organizational performance. While their study also found vision to be important as a leadership quality, it was portrayed in terms of sculpting a shared vision and creating shared meaning and purpose, and other processes that help achieve a common purpose. They also found that in comparison to the heroic models of the USA, the UK version of transformational leadership emphasized connectedness and inclusiveness allowing them to conclude that there was a 'far greater sense of proximity, openness, humility, and "vulnerability" in the UK approach to leadership' (2005: 63). They also noted that organizational, cultural and gender differences in their study might have accounted for differences found across the two countries.

Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe's research also highlighted tensions in how US theories view followership in relation to the transformational leadership compared with the UK approach. The US approach typically sees transformational leadership as winning the hearts, souls and minds of followers so that work roles and self-identity become synonymous with successful performance but also beliefs about self-acceptance and self-worth. Thus, self-sacrifice and exerting effort is dependent upon followers being completely subservient to the mission and vision of the organization cum its leader. In turn the leader has a moral responsibility to the followers and must be able to engage and inspire them at an emotional level (Bolden and Gosling 2006: 158).

In the UK approach, the importance of influence over followers was noted but the key to attaining this was by achieving a congruence between individual values, self-identity and dedication to the organization and marrying, rather than subverting, these to task objectives and the mission of the organization. Hence why Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe describe their findings as more akin to servant leadership, where the focus is on the followers and organizational objectives are subordinate outcomes, which is the reversal of the US approach (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005: 6–4, also citing Stone et al. 2003).

However Sinclair reminds us that transformational leadership is not just a powerful discourse that mobilizes the aspirations of employees so that they align with organizational purposes and identities become interwoven with organizational interests, it means that leadership selves are also disciplined to maintain the status quo they

create (2007: 132). The danger of this is that leadership is always seen as leaders having to transform rather than preserve or merely disrupt things to achieve change (Sinclair 2007: 28).

The narcissistic leader

The most powerful critical responses to the rhetoric of the transformational leaders recognize the tendency towards superficiality in the advocacy of 'visionary' leadership. Indeed, despite the advocacy of the 'post-heroic' leadership style (see below), heroic behaviours, celebrity images and virtual cult followings still seem to be very much in evidence in the media coverage of business leaders. But the vision which many managers have is not of the organization, or the future, but of themselves, as they seek to remake the world in their image (see Fineman 1993: 25–7). This mirrors the ultimate leader-centric project of the self. These leaders are said to be suffering from *narcissism* – which has been defined as the most common behavioural disease of the late twentieth century (Callaghan 1997). Fairhurst (2007: 107, citing Seidler 1989: 5) suggests that narcissism is part of how masculinist discourses come to normalize a distorted life experience of a particular category of *alpha males*, and this occurs alongside other multiple presentations of alpha males that are just as destructive as narcissism but escape such categorizations. Narcissism is generally treated as a problem of individual male pathology.

Narcissism was first identified by Freud, but its extent and social impact was not mapped until Christopher Lasch's 1979 book, *The Culture of Narcissism*. Coming as it did at the end of the 'me' decade, it was at first interpreted as a review of the 1970s, but Lasch insisted that it was a warning, and was as prophetic as it was documentary. In 1980 narcissism was officially given a diagnosis and set of symptoms in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (see Task Force on DSM IV 2000) and several books have since developed the subject (for example Symington 1993). Howard Schwartz (1990) applied the concept to organizational cultures, as we discussed in Chapter 3; Adrian Carr (1994, 1998) has applied the concept to individuals establishing identity within organizational relationships; Andrew Brown (1997) has considered its impact at individual, group and organizational levels; Alan Downs (1997) has applied the concept specifically to managers; and Alison Pullen and Carl Rhodes (2008) have noted how narcissism is gendered, and has different variants.

The narcissist, as a result of experiences in childhood, is driven by an anxiety, an inner feeling of lack of self-worth. This anxiety develops as a form of self-absorption or self-obsession which can appear as the opposite of this – as arrogance, grandiosity, overconfidence, disdain or contempt for others and a ruthless determination to stop at nothing to get what they want. Narcissists learn three basic lessons:

1. They must be something more than they are.
2. Their value as people is dependent upon the image they project.
3. Other people are objects who must be manipulated to get the validation that narcissists need.

As Downs (1997) argues, narcissistic behaviour produces a dearth of values, careful image management, an absence of empathy, loyalty or any deep emotion, and an obsession with personal gain. The narcissist, as leader, creates problems for organizations. For them, organizations should word their value statements carefully so that they can be easily discarded or twisted. Wrongdoing is sanctioned not by ethics but by such things as the legal liability faced by the company. Loyalty to employees, caring for customers or altruistic philanthropy (that is, anything not geared to making

more money) is considered weakness. The Al Dunlap case example illustrates a narcissistic leader displaying many of the qualities and behaviour associated with this form of leadership.

CASE EXAMPLE   Memo to Al Dunlap: You're Fired!

In 1994 Al Dunlap took over as chairman and chief executive officer of Scott Paper, to the acclaim of all those who believed that what mattered most in company management was enhancing shareholder value. Scott Paper had become, like so many other sclerotic companies, slow to move, bloated and bleeding money. Dunlap, a man who enters a room as though he has just rappelled down the side of the building, immediately took a chainsaw to the business, cutting employees by the thousands, closing plants, and even reneging on commitments made to charities by his predecessor. He reportedly looked at a shelf of binders containing the company's strategic plans from previous years and ordered that they all be eliminated, sniffing, 'I don't read fiction.'

Dunlap hacked away at employees and facilities over the next 18 months, and then negotiated a takeover by Kimberly-Clark at a price that was more than twice what the stock was worth when he arrived at the company. Wall Street was ecstatic, but others weren't quite so sure. Kimberly-Clark executives learned after the fact that Dunlap had all but eliminated major plant and equipment maintenance, slashed R&D expenses, and found other ways to borrow from the future in order to inflate the present bottom line. That was Dunlap's modus operandi, however. As Byrne puts it, 'Dunlap ran Scott's factories and drove people as if the company were going out of business.'

Even as Kimberly-Clark executives spent hundreds of millions of dollars to clean up the mess Dunlap had created, Scott investors were singing his praises for enriching them. At the same time, a new breed of activist investors was beginning to target underperforming companies, not for hostile takeovers, but for drastic makeovers. Michael Price and Michael Steinhardt were among those investors who had enormous sums at their disposal. They had locked their sights on Sunbeam and in 1996 engineered Dunlap's appointment as chairman and CEO, ostensibly to turn the company around. Dunlap took the position, with everyone quite convinced that it was going to be another Scott. The stock market reacted in kind and within two months boosted the stock price from 12 to 24. It continued to move up to a high of 52 before Dunlap and the company began to unravel.

Dunlap was not a master of turnarounds and restructurings, but of tantrums, abusive behaviour, dissembling and subterfuge. He implemented cuts arbitrarily, based on his own whims and recommendations from his right-hand man, Donald Burnham, a senior partner at Coopers & Lybrand. Swarms of accountants descended on Sunbeam operations looking only for ways to cut costs, not for ways to improve operations or profitability. Burnham's recommendations were often misguided, revealing a lack of understanding of the company's basic businesses. A recommendation to outsource the company's computer operations, for example, resulted in months of downtime and

higher costs. The draconian cuts encouraged Sunbeam's more able employees to head for the exits as quickly as possible. Dunlap quickly became a hated man among the employees of the company and eventually bought a bullet-proof vest and a gun – and charged them both to the company.

Donald Uzzi, a manufacturing executive in the firm, questioned the wisdom of closing a particular plant. His projections showed that closing the plant would save about $200,000 in annual transportation costs, but cost the company more than $10 million to consolidate the plant's operations with another plant some 40 miles away. Uzzi suspected that the decision was a trick. 'I thought Al was trying to see if I knew what I was doing.' But when he raised the issue with Dunlap, the CEO refused to discuss it. He had made his mind up that the plant was to be closed, period. Indeed, in his first week, Dunlap, with no real information to base his decision on, told his senior executive team that the company would eventually have just 4 or 5 plants operating, down from the current 26.

As the company's stock price went up, Dunlap realized that the 'Dunlap premium' was working against him because the company was becoming too expensive for any other company to acquire. Meanwhile Dunlap and his cronies resorted to a growing number of questionable accounting practices to 'make the numbers' each quarter. The most notorious was 'inventory-stuffing': selling customers far more product than they needed, but offering them considerable financial inducements to take the products. Such short-term tricks pump up the sales figures for a quarter or two, but come back to haunt the company when the customer refuses to buy any more product for months.

Dunlap's was an all-too-familiar story: a person with an enormous ego begins to believe his own press clippings. Investors flock to him, showering him with power and wealth, but failing to create any system of accountability. Hubris and greed dominate this story, but Dunlap was humiliated when he was fired and Michael Price watched his more than $600 million profit in Sunbeam stock evaporate. Both are, however, still extraordinarily wealthy men today. Never mind the long-term effects of their actions on thousands of individuals, the impact on communities, or the wisdom of such short-term thinking. Dunlap's so-called turnaround of Sunbeam in 1997 was little more than a manufactured illusion based on improper accounting moves, but for too many in the investment community, the response is 'who cares as long as I can make money on the stock.'

SOURCE: Adapted from an anonymous review of John Byrne (1999) *Chainsaw: The Notorious Career of Al Dunlap in the Era of Profit-At-Any-Price*, New York: HarperCollins on Knowledge@Wharton 10 December 1999, http://knowledge. wharton.upenn.edu/articles.cfm?articleid=105, accessed 12 February 2003.

The problem is that as one or two ruthless managers start to be successful, the message spreads and the behaviour develops into a situation of epidemic proportions. Eventually, corporate cultures succumb, and everyone must play by the narcis-

sist's rules – 'kill or be killed'. Downs sees this as a major sickness of corporate America but Lasch sees it as one of American society as a whole, and according to Callaghan it is not confined to the borders of the USA.

Brown (1997) has attempted to specify both the basic features of narcissism and how they impact at different levels of the organization, on individual behaviour, group process and organizational culture. The main traits are:

- *denial*
- *rationalization*
- *self-aggrandizement*
- *attributional egotism*
- *sense of entitlement* and
- *basic anxiety.*

These dimensions are explained in Table 10.3.

Downs points out that narcissistic behaviour and cultures are difficult to change. Once managers have reached a position of authority, they have probably had a couple of decades or more of reinforcement of their narcissism. The underlying problem cannot be fixed easily, and it requires the narcissist to want to change. Cultures in which narcissistic behaviour is widespread and has become the norm need top management commitment to change and that commitment has to be towards openness, trust and a respect for the truth. However, Downs tends to take the approach that cultures are basically a collection of individuals, and underemphasizes the extent to which structures – of power, political groupings, coalitions of interests, resource control and flow of information – may severely restrict what individuals can achieve. Downs does acknowledge that, in reality, change may not be possible, and suggests ways of living with a narcissistic colleague or manager. He concludes that narcissists are found in almost all organizations in positions of power because the drive for power is a core need of such leaders.

Daniel Sankowsky (1995) has examined how narcissism can also be found in those who are identified as being charismatic or transformational leaders. He says that these types of leader possess great symbolic power because their followers often come to idolize them and perceive them as someone they can profoundly trust. In turn, narcissistic charismatic leaders expect to be idolized by their loyal followers. Followers tend to idolize or romanticize charismatic leaders because of all or one of the following:

1. *omnipotent archetype* (the leader will nurture and guide them)
2. *leader as mystic* (knows the way and has the answers)
3. *heroic stereotype* (can move mountains)
4. *the value-driven virtuous leader* (looks after the collective good and is empowering) (Sankowsky 1995: 64).

Sankowsky suggests that when charisma and the pathology of narcissism are combined, leaders often promote visions that reflect their own sense of grandiosity, sweeping others up in their grand plans. They often approach ventures based on their own sureness of self rather than their command of information or clarity of insight (Sankowsky 1995: 65). They expect people to defer to them, to accept blindly their view of reality. Sankowsky (1995: 67) gives examples of a number of leaders who might qualify as narcissistic charismatic leaders, for example Steve Jobs (creator of Apple and NeXT), whose followers often spoke of him in terms of his perfection and high expectations and how they, as followers, could never be as good as him. One important aspect of charismatic/narcissistic leaders' influence is their ability to diminish the self-worth of others or make this totally dependent on their approval.

Table 10.3 Narcissism in organizations

Narcissistic traits	Level of analysis		
	Individual	*Group*	*Organization*
Denial	Individuals deny the reality of market demands and resource constraints, facts about themselves and features of past occurrences	Groups deny facts under the influence of groupthink and through denial myths	Organizations deny facts about themselves through spokes-people, propaganda campaigns, annual reports and myths
Rationalization	Individuals rationalize action, inaction, policies and decisions	Groups offer collective rationalizations for their activities, their structures and behaviour, their decisions and their status	Organizations provide rationalizations that structure thought and post hoc justify their actions, inaction and responsibility
Self-aggrandizement	Individuals engage in fantasies of omnipotence and control, exhibit grandiosity and exhibitionism, create cultures in their own image, narrate stories that flatter themselves, make nonsensical acquisitions, engage in ego-boosting rituals, and write immodest autobiographies	Groups use myth and humour to exaggerate their sense of worth, have fantasies of unlimited ability when under stress, and engage in exhibitionistic social cohesion ceremonies	Organizations endow themselves with rightness, make claims to uniqueness, commission corporate histories, and deploy their office layouts and architecture as expressions of status, prestige and vanity
Attributional egotism	Individuals blame external authority for their personal plight and narrate stories that contain self-enhancing explanations	Collectivities attribute the failure of their decisions to external factors	Organizations (or management groups) use annual reports to blame unfavourable results on external factors and attribute positive outcomes to themselves
Sense of entitlement	Individuals are exploitive, lack empathy, engage in social relationships that lack depth and favour their interests over shareholders	Groups use songs and humour and ceremonies to express a sense of entitlement	Organizations are structured according to a principle of entitlement to exploit. Organizations assume entitlement to continued successful existence
Anxiety	Individuals suffer internally, need stability and certainty, experience deprivation and emptiness, are paralysed by personal anxiety and tension, and struggle to maintain a sense of their self-worth	Management groups are prone to anxiety. Groups such as nurses and social care workers suffer from particularly high levels of anxiety	Organizations suffer from anomie and alienation, requiring shared culture, moral order, a common sense of purpose; leadership attempts to secure commitment, and the broader distribution of work responsibilites

Source: Adapted from Andrew D. Brown (1997) 'Narcissism, identity and legitimacy', *Academy of Management Review* 22(3): 643–6, 652–3.

Slavica Kodish (2006) proposes that narcissistic leaders in fact reflect our collective image of what we see as desirable in a leader, particularly the vision that promises great-ness for the organization, and hence for those who work in it, even though a narcissist's principal focus is on ego-gratification, especially through the adulation of followers. Kodish suggests that narcissism is a charismatic form of leadership because it is reinforced by particular modes of communication and impression-management skills that are highly alluring and seductive to followers who are party to the attribution of greatness, awe and admiration, not to mention fear that can also be mixed with such adulation.

Carr (1998: 86), however, points out that to see narcissism as a disorder with only negative effects is to neglect its 'Janus-like nature'. He reminds us that Freud considered that narcissism was ubiquitous and a necessary element in loving relationships, and cites Alford's observation that 'narcissism may serve as a stimulus for the achievement of the highest ideals' (Alford 1988: 27, cited in Carr 1998: 86; Rosenthal 2006; Rosenthal and Pittinsky 2006). Kets de Vries (2004) distinguishes between *healthy* and *excessive* narcissism, while Maccoby (2000) talks of *productive* and *unproductive* narcissism. Flett (2007) does not use the term, but his book is the story of a productive narcissist. The source of narcissists' anxiety and feeling of inferiority is the demands of an image of an ideal self that they find impossible to satisfy, but the pursuit of this ideal may lead to socially valued activities and goals as well as undesirable ones. Although Downs is probably correct in saying that the negative aspects of narcissism have reached epidemic proportions, we should not neglect its positive possibilities. Nor should we neglect the fact that narcissism is a quality or behaviour that not only plagues managers and leaders but can manifest in subordinates and peers as well, resulting in distinct problems for handling this behaviour in the workplace (Diamond and Allcorn 1990).

Sir Bob Geldof : Selflessness or the positive effects of narcissism?
Source: Photo © Florian Seefried/Getty Images

Alison Pullen (2006: 174; Pullen and Rhodes 2008) has attempted to develop a more nuanced approach to organizational narcissism. She reminds us that the myth of Narcissus involved also the nymph Echo, who wasted away to only a sound for the unrequited love of Narcissus, who was so in love with his own reflection that he killed himself when he could not possess it. Where Narcissus offers two modes of active masculine narcissism, the negative *bully/tyrant* or the productive *star performer*, aligning with the formulations of Kets de Vries and Maccoby, Echo also offers two hitherto neglected modes of passive feminine narcissism, the *victim* or the *servant*. Pullen illustrates these with examples of middle managers drawn from fieldwork in UK companies undergoing change and demonstrates that the concept has a wider range of practical applicability than previous studies have allowed – indeed, it could be argued that because leadership has historically been such a gendered concept, researchers have inevitably been drawn to the masculine dimensions of narcissism and have overlooked the feminine.

Aesthetic leadership

Two recent contributions to leadership studies turn away from the pathologizing approach and have raised the idea of aesthetic leadership. Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, Claes Gustafsson and Sven-Erik Sjöstrand (2007) argue that in recent years, art has become such a business, and artists such entrepreneurs, that business is lining up to learn from art (see Exhibit 10.3). They argue that aesthetic leadership, rather than being seen in terms of concern for people or production, or other versions of the mechanistic metaphor that underlies these concerns, and rather than being seen in terms of personal charisma, is better conceived of as *flow*. Here leadership involves orchestrating experiences that give people extreme joy, or extreme insight, what have been called *aesthetic* and *poetic moments* (Linstead 2000; Kuiper 2007). It involves motion, energy and momentum but also change and a willingness to cross boundaries, to bridge states of being. Leaders create events – which may vary from a small one-to-one encounter to Live Aid, in which each participant will get their own powerful experience from the engagement. All individual actions contain aesthetic

potential and, as Guillet de Monthoux et al. (2007) and others have argued, this sensate knowledge is not the preserve of artists, theatres, museums and concert halls, but is found in factories, markets, offices, farms and docks. The problem is that since the nineteenth century we have been so obsessed with rendering social and organizational life subservient to science – hence scientific management – that any form of knowledge that was not amenable to techno-economic rationality was dismissed as not being knowledge at all.

Hans Hansen et al. (2007) argue that leadership theory has in fact been recognizing the shortcomings of this limitation, but has not yet given its early attempts to depart from tradition a name, which they suggest is *aesthetic leadership*. They too are alive to the intense and the joyous in organizational life, but not sufficiently to forget that it also involves the ugly, the painful and difficult, the comic – in short any form of 'sensory knowledge and felt meaning' (Hansen et al. 2007: 545). They see the shift in focus towards felt meaning as allowing a revaluation of transformational leadership and the importance of vision, and similarly with charismatic leadership. In effect, they argue that leaders don't define or produce meaning for others – which was an idea advanced in the 1980s – but they create events, or open up opportunities, in which felt meaning is important (as well as any other meaning content there might be) and those involved experience emotional attachment. They also argue that a further component is *authentic leadership,* which is derived from positive psychology, and emphasizes positive qualities of authenticity (being true to one's self) such as well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope and optimism, flow and happiness, and the generation of trust. Pathological behaviour and either preparing for or repairing the worst in people are not the direction this approach pursues (Avolio et al. 2004; Gardner et al. 2005; Illies et al. 2005; Fairhurst 2007: 103). In these works the authentic self is associated with virtuosity and self-regulation to meet the highest standards of leadership, and if a leader displays negative behaviour, such as narcissism, then this is because of their lack of awareness of their true self. Through training and development, around which a huge industry has grown in the USA, the authentic leader can be nurtured. Thus, as Fairhurst says, the authentic leader has higher levels of self-awareness and this positive attribute is claimed to be universal and can be developed or tapped. In this approach, the essence of leadership is to be found in the qualities that pertain to one's true self, which also means suppressing or discarding the pathological or inauthentic self. Authentic leadership advocates that psychology can help find the authentic self in leaders and this is premised on a scientific and objective measure of traits and observed behaviours. Fairhust warns that any notion of authentic and inauthentic leadership is much more likely to be based on attributions (see Kodish above) and other influences, particularly gender, than psychological accounts would have us believe (Fairhurst 2007: 103–4; see also Sinclair 2007: Chapter 8). There is a danger that the construct of authenticity might lead to a dualism of authentic versus pragmatic (political or Machiavellian) leadership (see Chapter 6,
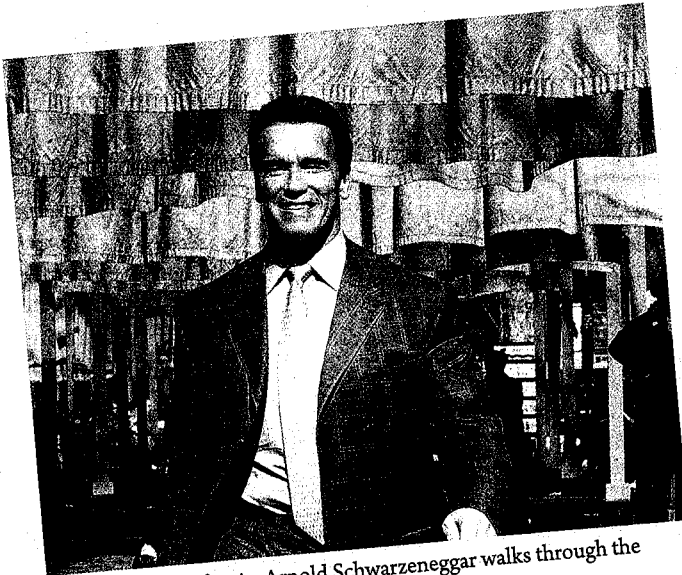
Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzeneggar walks through the Christo exhibition 'The Gates' in Central Park, NYC
Source: Photo © Arnaldo Magnani/Getty Images

and Buchanan and Badham 2008). In particular it tends to ignore the realities of organizational politics and power, and given the fact that managers will inevitably find themselves at some point having to implement policies with which they may not agree, the boundaries are not easy to draw. But the aesthetic approach need not do this, as Strati (2000) in particular argues – any aesthetic, he argues is negotiated, and is always someone's aesthetic, so it matters and is *political*. The French philosopher-historian Jacques Rancière (2006) has written on political aesthetics, and his work is becoming influential across the social sciences in Europe, but our point here is that any concept of authenticity deployed in aesthetic approaches to leadership will have more chance of developing a necessary critical capacity and political awareness if is developed from aesthetic considerations of authenticity, rather than the rather stilted contributions of positive psychology which derive from the sort of methodologies that informed earlier leadership theory and to which aesthetic leadership was supposed to offer an alternative.

EXHIBIT 10.3
Christo's Gates

Here, in the middle of a bleak February in 2005, Manhattanites who had never paid even a sound bite's worth of attention to the museum mile could not stop talking about the art exhibition going on in the Park. It had been played up on the front page of the *New York Times*, it had been featured on TV, and now it was the talk of the town: Christo and his wife and partner Jeanne Claude had just put up their Gates installation in Central Park.

Hundreds of guides were posted along the pathways to tell the back-stage story of the event – the story of the more than 7000 gates, their making, their unfurling and their scheduled lowering and recycling all within a relatively short span of time. They distributed fact sheets about the quantity of steel and vinyl used and the way the gates were manufactured and tested. A volume detailing the history of the more than two-decades-long project was soon sold out in the merchandising booths run by the city of New York and in the Met bookstore. Now and then, between speeches and dinner parties for celebrities and collectors, the Christos themselves strolled under the saffron curtains.

Within ten days, rumors were circulating that the costly project, which was entirely financed by the artists themselves, had broken even and that single paintings of the Gates fetched prices over $1 million. In a management seminar at the Guggenheim Museum, experts from Columbia University, Harvard Business School and Stockholm University drew on the Gates as a model for the marketing of Central Park and Manhattan, the financing of mega art projects and artful ways of organizing work in general. By the end of the Project quite a press debate had fermented over the issue of just what the Christos' $21 million investment had actually covered (McIntire 2005).

Just a few years back, it would not have crossed the minds of journalists, the audience or art connoisseurs that this spectacular piece of land art was simply an enterprise run by the Christo art firm. A decade ago artists as well as managers would have raised serious objections to such a connection between the field of art and business. And 20 years ago the Christos, now proudly posing in Central Park as the leaders of the Gates project, protested at being called entrepreneurs: 'That is precisely what our enemies call us!'

Times have changed, and the iron curtain between culture and the economy has rusted away. In an era when global capitalism has blurred interest and private enterprise, a radical antagonism between moneymaking and culture seems tricky to argue. It takes more than just being a rational economic man to run a successful business you know; managers are Janus-faced (Sjöstrand 1997) rather than one dimensional. Further, managers with new products who struggle to make an impact on markets, realize there is a lot to learn from the Christos' careful long-range planning, detailed preparation and astounding perseverance. Most enjoying the Gates project in February 2005 would think it both obvious and unproblematic for successful artists to enhance the aesthetic impact of their art by picking up a lesson or two from business. Furthermore, not only is artwork now acknowledged as the product of an art firm, more and more regular businesses also seem to be art-based in one way or other . We drive cars labelled Picasso, read books about Da Vinci, and travel to places with Guggenheim museums, for as French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello point out, art and aesthetics are at the foundation of the new spirit of global capitalism.

While art does indeed inspire products and services overtly, it operates covertly as well. For example, previously hidden aesthetic dimensions of work processes have today been discovered and appreciated as central to

efficiency and creativity. Aesthetic competence is as little the exclusive business of art schools as knowledge of how to run a business is the privileged domain of management schools. The differences between not-for-profit culture and profit-driven business have been thoroughly recounted; now there is a need to research similarities between doing art and running businesses. In light of the Christo experience, artists like Warhol, Beuys, and Pistoletto are at last seen as leaders too. We have no reservations about referring to the Christos and their like as real leaders in business as well as art, but the time has come to figure out why and how.

SOURCE: Extracted from Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, Claes Gustafsson and Sven-Erik Sjöstrand (2007) *Aesthetic Leadership*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Post-heroic leadership

Post-heroic leadership became popular in the 1990s for a number of reasons that are discussed below. However, its origins date back to the work of David Bradford and Allan Cohen (1984). Bradford and Cohen identified what they claimed was a new form of leadership that is associated with transformational leadership but has a much greater emphasis on managers developing their subordinates. There is a tendency for transformational leaders to display, and be expected to display, heroic characteristics, to be either the super technician who can do everything in the organization as well as or better than the next person, or the super conductor who sits on top of the organization directing the players with a 'wave of the baton'. Bradford and Cohen believe that in neither of these situations is responsibility shared; employees are not empowered or allowed to develop new roles. They argue that the *post-heroic leader* is the manager as *developer*, who approaches every situation as an opportunity for him or her, his or her employees or the organization to develop their capabilities and capacities – in effect to become a learning organization (see Chapter 1). They believe that the technician and conductor models have their uses, but that the circumstances for which they were most fitted are not the characteristics of most organizations. Table 10.4 summarizes the three leadership styles proposed by Bradford and Cohen.

Table 10.4 Appropriate leadership styles

		Technician	Conductor	Post-heroic
1.	Subordinates work independently	×		
2.	Subordinates do simple tasks	×		
3.	Environment is stable	×	×	
4.	Subordinates have low technical knowledge compared to boss	×	×	
5.	Subordinate commitment not needed	×	×	
6	Subordinates do complex tasks		×	×
7.	Subordinates require considerable coordination		×	×
8.	Environment is changing			×
9.	Subordinates have high technical knowledge			×
10.	Subordinate commitment necessary for excellence			×

Source: David Bradford and Allan Cohen (1984) *Managing for Excellence*, New York: John Wiley, p. 56.

The calls for post-heroic leadership, and the questioning of the images of the transformational leader, intensified during the 1990s to the extent that Warren Bennis (1999), the eminent US scholar, proclaimed 'the end of leadership' as we have thought of it in the past, declaring that 'exemplary leadership is impossible without

full inclusion, initiatives, and cooperation of followers' – in fact the title of his paper (also see Grint 2000; Badaracco, Jr. 2003). However, three key factors seem to have contributed to this development:

1. rapid and often turbulent changes in the business environment;
2. a general feeling of malaise or discontent with the image of managers and, by extension, leaders; and
3. the problem of managing diversity in the workplace, particularly accommodating women managers cum leaders. We look at each of these in more detail.

1. *Rapidly changing and turbulent business environments* refer to a complex set of factors, of which the following were particularly important in debunking notions of heroic leadership:
   - Downsizing and flattening of businesses led to many layers of management being removed, forcing or allocating responsibility for managing change to all levels of the organization.
   - Internationalization and globalization of businesses, making it increasingly difficult to centralize power, hence leadership, in the head office of the organization.
   - Rapidly changing, highly sophisticated, integrated networked technologies have allowed for more information dissemination and exchange and the involvement of many more managers and employees in decision-making and strategic activities.
   - The increasing number of executive and employee share option programmes, profit sharing and other performance-based remuneration have encouraged more people to want to have a say in strategic decision making.
   - Deregulation of markets has increased competition and brought into stark relief inefficient business practices that often necessitate organization-wide change and commitment, not just at the senior levels.

2. *The general feeling of malaise and discontent with leadership* emerged again from a complex set of factors:
   - The failed corporate entrepreneurs of the late 1980s, who became associated with greed and ruthlessness, did much to damage the image of the lone, heroic (male) leader. Alistair Mant (1993, cited in Caulkin 1993: 40) made the observation that most leaders who fit this image are male authoritarians, of stunted intellect with another abnormal qualification – greed.
   - Associated with corporate failures was a general questioning of how leadership actually contributed to wealth creation in organizations.
   - The general trend of running companies through committees and boards tended to diminish the idea that a single leader was setting the direction and vision for the organization.
   - The rise to CEO positions of functional specialists in accounting and finance, who were less concerned with, and often less skilled in, leadership (for example visioning, motivating, communicating, building cultures for change) and who placed a greater focus on 'bottom-line' issues, such as cost cutting, shedding labour and return on investment, led to the downgrading of the leadership factor in management (Caulkin 1993: 41; Haigh 1994: 14).
   - Research was starting to show that that leaders have followers, and sometimes the followers are just as capable as the leaders of providing leadership (Nutt 1995: 68, citing Kelley 1992).
   - US research also found that at least 50 per cent of followers surveyed, or people identifying themselves as having a leader, expressed deep dissatisfaction with

their leaders (often managers), citing the fact that few of them provided positive role models and even fewer instilled trust (Nutt 1995: 68, citing Kelley 1992).

■ The recognition that the time has long gone when a company could rely on a single leader to do the thinking (strategic or otherwise), while the followers 'parked their brains at the door' (Caulkin 1993: 40).

■ It was also thought that followers, especially if empowered, which presumes post-heroic leadership, were more likely to be able to provide checks and balances in an organization (Caulkin 1993: 41).

■ Post-heroic leadership style works where organizations are trying to gain competitive advantage from creating intellectual capital and attracting knowledge workers who do not readily respond to the highly controlled mode of leadership found under the transformational approach or the heroic activities of a single leader (Huey 1994: 26; see also Crawford 1991).

■ Pressures for lifelong learning (see Kotter 1995), and the need to promote radical innovations and change, are increasingly seen to be dependent on employees' willingness to change – forceful and remote leadership is seen as counterproductive to this.

■ The pressure for ordinary managers to invent, push and implement radical change, and encourage more teamwork also brought into question the relevance of heroic leadership (Sherman 1994: 73; also Chapters 9 and 11).

■ Organizations are always experimenting with new ways of gaining competitive advantage, and one of these is to tap the 'spiritual' or deeper emotional sides of people's personalities. The 'macho' transformational heroic leader image does not sit well with efforts to tap the tacit (or personal) knowledge of employees for sources of creativity and innovation (Sherman 1994: 74; Cavaleri and Fearon 1996: 363–74; and Chapter 11).

■ As organizations also become more involved in networks and interorganizational relations (IOR) with suppliers, customers and competitors, different styles of leadership will be required to share information and build trust.

3. *Managing diversity*:
The literature on diversity (see Chapter 2) raised concerns about how men and women manage and has brought into question the gender stereotyping associated with heroic leadership. A growing body of literature on women and leadership (for example Rosener 1990; Denmark 1993) suggests that women do lead differently, even in terms of the transformational variables (Alimo-Metcalfe 1995), and that the dominance of heroic images of leadership presents significant barriers to women achieving and succeeding in leadership roles. The discussion on 'Gender and leadership' below takes this issue further but suffice it to say, gender is a concern in post-heroic approaches to leadership, even if these approaches do not go far enough.

Another aspect of diversity that has been bubbling under the surface since the late 1990s has been the generational differences between the so-called 'baby-boomers' (those born in the decade and a half after the Second World War (1945–1960), Generation X (the children of the baby-boomers or the 30–45 year age group), and Generation Y (the new entrants to the workforce), which have cast doubt on the virtues of the leadership style of boomers (highly competitive, workaholics) who are often portrayed as being poor models of leadership, especially in terms of dealing with or even acknowledging family–work balance issues (Hill and Stephens 2005).

Research by Robert Kelley (cited in Nutt 1995: 69 and Caulkin 1993: 41) suggests that many organizations do not need heroic leaders because they are

already well endowed with exemplary followers. The designation, *exemplary follower*, begins to question the notion of leader-centrism. He states that many leaders feel threatened by their subordinates, yet exemplary followers are crucial to the success of an organization because they are vital to designing and carrying out plans. Exemplary followers are active, independent and critical thinkers. They also tend to have strong values and are what Kelley calls the *courageous conscience* of the organization (Nutt 1995: 69, citing Kelley 1992). However, according to Kelley, leaders cannot 'create' exemplary followers. They can, however, use a number of strategies to ensure that exemplary followers and leaders form partnerships and that the CEO (strategic leader) ensures that exemplary followers succeed and are productive.

> To be a post-heroic leader requires very different qualities to that of the heroic leader; post-heroic leaders do not expect to solve all the problems themselves. They realize no one person can deal with the emerging colliding tyrannies of speed, quality, customer satisfaction, innovation, diversity and technology. Virtual leaders just say no to their egos. (Huey 1994: 26)

However, in the real world of business many CEOs or senior managers are likely to be reluctant to embrace the idea of post-heroic leadership (as described in the quote above), as they might perceive it as threatening their status, power, prestige and public standing, including consideration of the legal and proprietorial rights that they enjoy, and against which they are judged and often very handsomely rewarded (Coopey 1995: 195). The current high percentage claimed for narcissistic leadership of US companies seems to bear this out. For example, one of the key elements of providing support for exemplary followers is sharing risks and rewards and this means that leaders must, when times get tough, such as when there is downsizing or layoffs, demonstrate that they are willing to share the loss with their followers (Kelley, cited in Nutt 1995: 69). To illustrate this point, Kelley gives the example of the CEO of Firestone (a large multinational based in the USA) who accepted a huge bonus at a time when his company was halving its workforce. He also describes how, by contrast, Perot, a vice-president on the board of General Motors, resigned from the board in the 1980s in protest at increased executive bonuses at a time when plants were being closed. Another similar example comes from the UK, where, in 1998, the chief executive of Goodyear sacrificed his annual salary in an attempt to impress upon employees the need to think carefully about the company's position before demanding a wage rise.

While this and other approaches to followership draw attention to the problems of leader-centrism and offer an antidote to this theorizing, there is an inherent tendency to either replace leader-centrism with follower-centrism or keep the dualism in place but give primacy to followers (Collinson 2005).

Approaches to post-heroic leadership

Different versions of post-heroic leadership have emerged in the management literature (see for example Manz and Sims 1992 on self-leadership) but Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie's (1997) is one of the more well known. These authors argue that changes in societies, such as: markets being more open; customers being more demanding, diverse and international; increased competition and collaboration through networks and alliances; and technological advances, require a serious rethinking of what leadership might mean in many organizations. They believe that the leader's work is focused now more than ever on coping with a *multiplicity of adaptive challenges* rather than one major crisis. Instead of focusing on styles or contingen-

cies, they argue that leadership is now the work of many people in an organization, as a form of *distributed* or *collective leadership*. They believe (as do many other theorists) that organizations have to rethink their values, develop new strategies and learn new ways of operating to meet adaptive challenges. Leaders have to be able to mobilize (that is, influence) people to adopt new behaviours and, in the process, change their own behaviours, especially the tendency to provide solutions, solve problems and take responsibility for driving change (that is, the transformational leader with a capital 'T', who comes with the 'vision' in hand).

Heifetz and Laurie identify subtle changes in leadership and followership as a result of having to face adaptive challenges. *Adaptive challenges* mean leaders must figure out how to harness the collective intelligence of the organization through building new relationships within, across and outside the organization. They say this requires:

> Leaders from above or below, with or without authority – [engaging] people in confronting the [adaptive] challenges, adjusting their values, changing perspectives, and learning new habits. (Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 134)

Solutions are discovered or learned and are no longer 'handed down' or 'given out' by leaders, as envisaged in heroic approaches to leadership. This approach advocates a distributed, shared or collective model of leadership but it also suggests that leadership is a process of co-creating meanings about the stories that will help the organization to change.

The authors note that the adaptive challenges are also distressing because they make demands on people to take on new roles, relationships, values, work practices and behaviours (Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 124). All these changes can involve pain, a sense of loss and fear about the future, and leaders need the sensitivity, skills and knowledge to manage the emotional labour involved in such change (see Chapter 9).

Heifetz and Laurie propose six principles as guides to the work of leading to meet adaptive challenges:

1. *Getting on the balcony*
   - Leaders (or leadership teams) need to be able to stand back and reflect on the need for change. They no longer 'helicopter' over the organization seeing the 'big picture' as in the transformational leadership approaches. Rather, the leader (or leaders) needs to be able to create or see the context for change, and then impart this need for change in a compelling story or narrative that allows others to let go of the past, embrace the need for change, and accept responsibility for shaping a new future. There is no all-embracing vision but rather a direction for change that is negotiated through confronting issues and challenges. This view is reinforced by Richard Hackman (1992: 156–9) who notes that the voluminous literature on leadership and management has little to say on the direction-setting activities of managers.

2. *Identifying adaptive challenges*
   - Leaders must develop trust among colleagues so that people learn to collaborate and develop a collective sense of responsibility for change (Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 126).
   - Leaders need to be able to differentiate between technical challenges (identified as basic routines) and adaptive challenges which require learning new ways of doing business, developing new competencies and the need to work collectively (Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 126).
   - Leaders must hold up a 'mirror' to see how they, as leaders of change, are also a part of the adaptive challenge. They need to ask in what ways is the executive

team dysfunctional (see Chapter 11) and how might its members develop insights to help them better understand their roles in confronting adaptive challenges (Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 126) (that is, how they can develop reflective practice, as mentioned in Chapter 1).

3. *Regulating distress*
   - Leaders need to strike a delicate balance between having people feel the need for change and at the same time not allowing them to be overwhelmed by it, yet all the while keeping up the momentum for change (Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 127).
   - Leaders have to have the emotional capacity to endure uncertainty, frustration and pain and understand fears, stresses and sacrifices, yet still be able to instil confidence in the need to change by taking up adaptive challenges.

4. *Disciplining attention*
   - Leaders build on diversity, multiple views, realities and perspectives in order to encourage innovation and learning. To do this leaders (or managers) must deal with, and bring out into the open, all forms of work avoidance, such as scapegoating, denial, stereotyping, focusing on technical issues to cover up more political and personal issues, blaming others, attacking individual perspectives and so on. Leaders need strategies that enable them to get people to refocus on building dialogue, problem solving and creativity (see Chapter 1).

5. *Giving work back to people*
   - 'Give work back to people' is a short-cut term for 'empowerment'. Empowering can involve such things as sharing information (extensively), including opening up the company's books to employees and exposing sensitive information (Quinn and Spreitzer 1997: 39). This was also mentioned by Kelley (1992) in followership strategies. Robert Quinn and Gretchen Spreitzer point out that empowerment is not a set of specific management practices but rather a reflection of a person's beliefs or feelings about their work.

6. *Protecting voices of leadership from below*
   - Heifetz and Laurie (1997: 729) say that it is important to give a 'voice' to all people in the organization and that this giving of voice is key to encouraging experimentation and learning (see also Chapter 1). Yet they note that whistleblowers, creative deviants and other original thinkers often have their voices smashed or routinely silenced because organizations and their managers (leaders) want equilibrium, harmony and consensus, and often seek affirmation of their views and support for their pet projects. Teamwork or being a team player, and other 'unifying' or 'conforming' strategies, are often used to bring dissenting voices into check (see Chapter 11). They believe that people who speak beyond their authority are apt to be self-conscious and generate too much passion about their cause, and are likely to pick the wrong place, time and person to open up to. They exhort leaders to see these people as valuable sources of information, insight and leadership and not persons to be silenced although recent research has suggested than many employees question whether the door is really open for them to voice their views without detriment (Detert and Burris 2007; Heifetz and Laurie 1997: 129–30).

Heifitz and Laurie's work is one of a number of approaches to post-heroic leadership in which, as we noted above, the leader–follower relationship is modified but the dualism persists. Organizations, such as Semco in Brazil (Semler 1993) and W.L. Gore and Associates in the USA (Huey 1994; Skipper and Manz 1994), have been

regularly touted as examples of post-heroic leadership in practice and continue to be so. Both these organizations have developed a post-heroic, or even craft-style approach to leadership (Mintzberg 1997: 14) by working on the principles of trust and commitment to spread the work of leadership (a distributed form) to as many people as possible. In the case of Semco, this has involved shop-floor employees or relatively unskilled workers taking on leadership roles and rotating leadership positions at the executive level. W.L. Gore and Associates is a high-tech company employing highly professional people, whereas Semco is principally a manufacturer of pumps, mixer valves and other industrial equipment. Neither firms' owner portrays himself as a leader (Ricardo Semler of Semco sees himself as a 'counsellor'), and both shirk titles and many symbols of status in the workplace, such as a large office. Semco has built its system of trust to include a package of monetary rewards, including profit sharing and incentives. Semler has now become a celebrated management guru.

Exemplary leadership

A popular view of post-heroic leadership was developed by former Stanford academic Jim Collins who, in his book *Good to Great* (2001), argued that humility was a necessary factor in twenty-first century leadership, premised on the demise of heroic leadership (see also Kodish 2006). On the basis of large-scale research conducted by his self-funded research 'lab', Collins (2001; Collins and Porras 1994; see also www.jimcollins.com) he argues that leadership has five levels with Level 5 being the *exemplary* one:

Level 5 is what Collins calls the 'extra dimension' of executive leadership – a blend of *personal humility* (putting the long-term good of the company and the contributions of others above personal credit or ego) and *professional will* (commitment, staying power, willingness to make tough decisions if they are right).

Level 4 is leadership as traditionally conceived, with an effective leader, emphasizing heroism, performance and the 'celebrity CEO' as a way of catalyzing commitment to stimulate higher performance.

Level 3 is competent management expressed in traditional transactional management terms.

Level 2 is a contributing team member who has team and group skills that enhance performance in this context.

Level 1 is a highly capable individual who makes contributions through talent and good work habits (Collins 2001: 20).

For Collins, *Level 5 leadership* is not about the ambition of the leader but for their institution, to make it great. He puts this as a simple equation: *Humility + Will = Level 5* (2001: 22). Over five years, Collins' researchers studied companies who had consistently outperformed the stock market by more than three times. They discovered CEOs who few people had ever heard of like Darwin Smith, who headed Kimberly-Clark for over 20 years and never stopped trying to be 'qualified for the job', and David Maxwell, who, having turned Fannie Mae from a loss maker into a company beating the stock market by a factor of seven, gave a third of his retirement bonus to charity lest he damage the company reputation by appearing greedy. They had successes far in excess of those of the media stars such as Lee Iacocca, former CEO of Chrysler in the USA or Al Dunlap (see above). Collins argues that Level 5 leadership is the antithesis of egocentric celebrity, which displays the symptoms of narcissism (see above).

Collins' original study was not about leadership – it just so happened that leadership emerged as one of the repeated explanations given by others in the organization for the success of these companies. He began his investigations by looking for evidence as to why his 11 companies, which had been laggards, were able to be turned

around and achieve sustained performances at levels above many of the *Fortune 500* companies. He was also struck by the fact the CEOs of these companies had stayed for relatively long periods with the company, averaging at least 15 years. He discovered that leadership was repeatedly proffered by interviewees as the reason for the great achievements of the companies. He also found that sound business practices (for example selecting good people) as well as some unexpected ones, such as not being slavishly driven by new technology, also contributed to the move from good to great performance (2001: 39–40).

Collins' proposed that the Level 5 leadership style could be universally applicable, especially in explaining successful turnaround situations, but he never concluded one way or the other if this style of leadership could be learned – because he never investigated that point. While Collins' work certainly dealt a blow against heroic models of leadership, it still sought to distil the essence of leadership based on qualities or attributes that really amounted to a new style of leadership and leader-centrism. It does not add much to our understanding of followership or other distributed or shared forms of leadership (Collinson 2005) and it reinforces a version of the Protestant work ethic (see Jacques 1996) that is likely to mirror the values of the workaholic, driven baby-boomer managers in the study (see Collins 2001: 39). However, Collins has theorized leadership more fully as an *agent of incremental change*, emphasizing organizational processes and practices as keys to sustained growth and success. In the end, Collins claims that his findings are based on empirical evidence and are not ideological. Yet going back to Sinclair's comments at the beginning of the chapter, any theory of leadership that does not address the things that are routinely excluded is part of the conventional and mainstream leadership discourse which, as she has shown, supports certain presuppositions. At least two of these are the lack of attention given to power and gender in framing the findings, so while heroics might have been challenged, we still have a dominant masculinist account of leadership.

Leading

In this section of the chapter we present several different approaches to leadership that can be broadly grouped as adopting a *constructionist approach* in which what counts as 'true', 'objective' or a 'fact' results from competing accounts of reality and since language is a social phenomenon, any account of reality is collective and temporal (Grint 2005). In this approach, leadership is *de-individualized* and *de-centred* with the notion of a single leader 'running the show', so to speak, no longer carrying sway. These approaches treat all accounts of leadership as *discourses of leadership*. They operate from the premise that it is through interactions that relational patterns, such as leader and/or follower emerge, and these are co-created in processes that constitute our understanding of leadership (Fairhurst 2007: 8). This co-creating occurs through interpretations, sense-making and language-in-use and that is why some refer to this as a *discursive approach to leadership*, aptly captured in the following quote:

> First, it represents leadership as a process of influence and meaning management among actors [subjects] ... Second, leadership is an attribution made by followers or observers. Third, the focus is on the leadership process ... in contrast to heroic leadership models ... Finally, leadership as influence and meaning management need not be performed by only one individual appointed to a given role: it may shift and distribute itself among several organizational members. (Fairhurst 2007: 6, our inclusion)

In contrasting this approach to mainstream leadership theories, four key differences become apparent (Fairhurst 2007: 8–15):

1. *The social and cultural context*
   - Discursive leadership focuses on such things as subjectivity (leader's experience of her or his self), identities (the multiple ways in which we present ourselves and how others try to regulate or influence this process), relationships (of power, gender, ethnicity), cultures, organizations as macro-actors (giving voice and agency to people) and dominant discourses as disciplining, regulating and acting as systems of thought (such as heroic leadership discourses). These approaches do not operate on any one level of analysis but reflect the blurring of boundaries in each of the above areas (see Parry and Hansen 2007 for an example of this approach in which they use story-telling, discourse, identity and so on to explain leadership development).

2. *Subject/actor*
   - Discursive leadership focuses on a socially constructed notion of leadership where 'what counts as a "situation" and what counts as an "appropriate" way of leading in that situation are interpretive and contestable issues' (Fairhurst, citing Grint 2000: 3). Leadership as process means studying how, under different conditions and circumstances, competing and conflicting accounts of leadership (such as claims about the essence of leadership, traits, style and behaviour) emerge, are challenged, reinvented and modified over time.

3. *Encompassing view of power*
   - The discursive approach, as we have already seen in Chapter 6, considers power and influence as potentially positive and/or negative, visible and/or invisible. As Fairhurst says, in this approach power is seen in Foucauldian terms as 'local, relational, and embedded in specific technologies governed by Discourses that have the power to discipline' (2007: 12). Power can be the source of resistance on the part of actors/subjects, including those designated as management, and multiple discourses of power open up creative, productive and positive, as well as disruptive, oppositional and resisting, potentials as individuals work at forging their identities, which most often include leadership and follower ones (Fairhurst 2007: 12, citing Collinson 2006; also see Collinson 2005; Sinclair 2007: 139–43).

4. *Reflexive agency*
   - The discursive approach to leadership, although varying in how much knowledgeability it attributes to actors, presents them as responsible agents who are part and parcel of the accomplishment of leadership, engaged in the process of leading. There is no single person who is privileged as being all encompassing and knowing as a leader – they are not automatically cast as the bearers of all knowledge, truth or certitude although such agents play a critical part in the social construction of leadership. It acknowledges that a certain element of fantasy, seduction and romanticizing occurs in accounts given of leadership. This view of actors/subjects as both knowledgeable and reflexive means that leadership is very much about managing the tensions between agency (recognizing that leadership is a social accomplishment of many actors) and constraint (acknowledging that there are always pressures to draw boundaries, to conform or perform leadership in predictable ways that place limits on the possibilities of leadership) (Fairhurst 2007: 14).

We now explore how each of these contributes to an alternative paradigm of leadership by presenting three different approaches to leading: a constitutive, sense-making and post-individualist account of leadership. These approaches are treated as

discourses of leadership and each provides a different, although complementary account of how the process of leadership might be interpreted and understood. They are not exhaustive of these approaches to leadership. Although the term 'leadership' is still adopted in two of the aforementioned approaches, it closely aligns with the notion of leading as described above.

A constitutive approach to leadership

Keith Grint's book, *The Arts of Leadership* (2000), presents a *constitutive approach* to leadership in which he turns attention to what he terms *arts of leadership*. His basic premise is that the more we try to use scientific studies to illuminate and understand leadership the more confused we will get because leadership is essentially an interpretative affair (Grint 2000: 4–6). Grint uses case studies of famous historical and contemporary figures, including a woman, each paired in parallel scenarios in which there were only marginal differences between the situations they had to confront, to try to assess if leadership might have made a difference to how things turned out. He concluded that leadership became the most plausible explanation for why, when facing similar challenges, one person can fail while another succeeds, for example Branson (who took over Laker's Skytrain concept) succeeded where Laker failed (Grint 2000: 28–9). His work not only moved beyond a quality and attributes approach to leadership, but also pushed the notion of followership much further than others by suggesting that leaders are only necessary so long as followers believe they need them, and that leaders must be responsible to their followers. In particular, he asserted that leaders needed followers to help correct their errors of judgement and mistakes, but in order for this to occur there had to be a culture in which leaders no longer believed that their positions of responsibility made them omnipotent or all-knowing (Grint 2000: 420).

Grint proposes four arts of leadership that can be used to explain success and failure of leadership across all organizational settings. His focus on arts of leadership deliberately implies that there is no science of leadership nor any one particular repertoire of actions that will decide the fate of leaders and their followers. He says leadership is critically concerned with establishing and coordinating relationships between four things: the *who* (constructing a sense of identity for followers); the *what* (the inventiveness of a future or strategy (or vision) that can stir the imagination of followers and resonates with their desires); the *how* (devising tactics that use power creatively); and the *why* (having the rhetorical and negotiating skills, as well as skills of persuasive communication, to engage followers and make them believe in the world the leader creates for them with words and props, as one would for a stage performance) (Grint 2000: 27–8; also Jackson and Parry 2003). Grint presents leadership as actions (acts) that have to be taken in all situations and these actions are not the acts of the leader but actions collectively performed and this is captured in the following quote by Annie Pye:

> following is the measure of leading and leading is the measure of following …We take some particular activity to be an example of good leadership by *the followers* playing their parts; a good piece of following is known by a *leader* playing his or her part. (Pye 2005, citing Mangham and Pye 1991: 59)

Grint (2000: 6, cited in Fairhurst 2007: 3) identifies some particularly important *paradoxes of leadership* that arise from acts of leadership:

- leadership was more inventive than analytical, individual or cognitive
- leadership interactions were noted for being contested and creative in nature

- reason and rationality do not win the hearts and minds of followers but rather persuasion
- collective identities upon which leadership rests are forged in conflict and challenge.

For Grint, leadership is not just a performance but is also constituted through rhetoric and it is in the transmission of accounts of leadership in which a performance is reproduced, expanded, distorted and reconstructed. As he says, *persuasive rhetoric* is not the same as the leadership performance but part of its reproduction. He says this is important to remember when trying to find the so-called 'truth about leadership' because what we mostly have to rely on is what others (such as followers) transmit about a leader's reputation, which is based on how they read his/her performance in a given situation and their state of mind at the time this reading and transmitting occurs (Grint 2000: 24–5).

Leadership as sense-making

Annie Pye also sees leadership and followership as occurring between people rather than heroes or stars and as processes involved in leading people rather than about leadership per se or a focus on particular individuals. These processes are focused on the power to define meanings that followers will appreciate and act upon. She says that if followers do not respond to the intended actions of leaders then there will be *random responses* (a term used by Peckham 1979) or the *seeds of disorganization in the organization of meaning* (citing Smirchich and Morgan 1982: 259) with the net effect being that eliciting collective responses becomes difficult for all concerned (Pye 2005: 35–7). This reaffirms the notion of leadership as social influence (see Pondy 1978), but in a *process view of leadership*, what is important is that leadership cannot be extracted from contexts and the experiences of participants in the relationship (Lawler 2005: 225). It also lends support to the view that any notion of leading people is largely an uncertain, fragmented and often incoherent affair as distinct from what heroic and even some post-heroic approaches to leadership might suggest (see Alvesson and Svenginsson 2003: 985; Ford 2006). Pye draws on Karl Weick (1995: 17) to define leading in terms of *sense-making*. She says the process of leading is 'grounded in identity construction about which we make retrospective sense [life is lived forwards but understood backwards or in hindsight], enactive of sensible environments, undoubtedly social and ongoing, focused on and extracted by cues and … driven by plausibility – shaping plausible meaning – rather than any notion of accuracy' (Pye 2005: 38).

Pye uses a case study of a UK-based global retail manufacturer (not identified by name) and distributor in decline, to help illustrate what she means by leadership as a process of leading (Pye 2005: 41).

CASE EXAMPLE **The meaning of leading**

Aware of the need for significant change, the board brought forward the appointment of the new chief executive (CE). Common to most CEs in this position, he felt a great need for action on two different fronts: both to keep the business running and performing well and also to start raising performance levels through a strategic change initiative. He spent some considerable time addressing these problems, gathering data, talking to people, and shaping up his plan.

In the process of so doing, he was enacting leadership at all times: talking, listening, shaping meaning and conveying in every aspect of his demeanour some sense of the prevailing definition of the situation. And so he spearheaded a plan, a new vision of a global change programme, presenting and discussing it first with executive colleagues in the Executive Operations Group (EOG), taking soundings with major shareholders and other 'outsiders', and then achieving final sign-off at board level. In both the EOG and amongst board members, he found it to be apparently well supported. So as soon as it was agreed, implementation plans were put into action. Or at least that is what he thought was happening.

During the course of the next six to nine months, he began to realize why the plan was not actually delivering the numbers it should have been in order to achieve this new strategic direction, that is, it was not being properly and fully implemented because it was [CE's name]'s vision and lacked support from key people in many different ways and places. As the CE described it:

> In my first attempt, I assumed ... that ... great leadership knew everything and so what you were expected to do if you were head of the corporation is actually to know the answers. It's a very big mistake because you're not and you won't. Version 1 ... was intellectually perfectly sound but it didn't have the hearts and minds of anybody else. And off I went with this [strategy] but none of my colleagues were with me and so it wasn't possible to change anything. They would say 'well that's all very logical and we're happy with that' but nothing changed because they weren't part of it. And ... actually it was described as '[CE]'s Vision which was awful. The first time I heard that I thought 'oh, great', the second time I heard it I thought 'Oh!' ... and it [became] very clear that if I wanted to do this thing, I would have to completely and utterly and radically change the way I operated!

Based on the CE's concern that the corporate vision was seen as his rather than anyone else's, he did a lot of reflecting on his own leadership, talking with others outside the organization as well as searching within. He then got the top 30 senior managers together, initially for three days, went back to the drawing board and began again. Working together in smaller groups with the help of a facilitator, they worked out their vision of what they should be ultimately and following subsequent meetings, agreed to a form of words which had unanimous support, to the extent they each signed their names on the page around this (to be public) statement of their vision. This was even the case for those for whom this was effectively signing their redundancy notice, because one consequence of this change meant that over half of this group would no longer have a role. However, they all agreed to this because there was a collective understanding of this as the most sensible and only way forward for the business.

SOURCE: Based on excerpts from Annie Pye (2005) 'Leadership and organizing', *Leadership* **1**(1): 41–3.

Pye also provides accounts from various line and regional managers about how they experienced the change strategy and gives examples of how random responses and the disorganization of meaning led to an impossible challenge for the CE in being able to shape and sustain his vision. Pye also illustrates how the CE came to see the process of leading as very much about negotiating, 'seeing what happens', and living with many unintended consequences, where one thing led to another in unpredictable ways that were both welcome and unwelcome. Leading was very much about dealing with how change is shaped and meanings given to actions surrounding such change (Pye 2005: 42–4). Pye's account of leading shows that it revolved around the paradoxes identified by Grint and that there were strong parallels in the way leadership became a performance in which the required arts of leadership were evident.

Post-individualistic leadership

Richard Bolden et al. (2006; also Ford 2005; Bolden and Gosling 2006), criticize current leadership studies for producing categorizations of 'good' and 'effective' leadership that are translated into leadership competencies and capabilities, to be used for training and performance assessment, yet which in the end tell us nothing about the lived experience of leadership. Much of their criticism is waged against studies of transformational leadership in the NHS in the UK, such as described above (see Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005). They claim that for conventional thinkers (and approaches), it would be incomprehensible to think about leadership without focusing on the qualities and capabilities of a few people and fixating on the methods by which to select and train them (Bolden et al. 2006). This becomes tantamount to treating leadership as a product rather than a process. They say that by looking at leadership as a process, we are forced to rethink what we mean by qualities and capabilities and, especially, do not focus immediately on a few key people whose appearance (through naming them and so on) we think represents the objective reality of leadership. Instead, such selection can be accounted for by the fact that we have been trained to look for only a limited number of people to qualify as leaders thus automatically excluding or leaving other people out of consideration who might comprise a much larger collective. In other words, any notion of leadership qualities and capa-

bilities is an abstraction and a part of how we are trained to frame notions of leadership to exclude or dismiss different versions of what it might be. They illustrate this point by the following vignette:

What you see is what you get

[In] a healthcare setting perhaps it would be better to reconnect with how a moving, living multi-disciplinary team such as a maternity department works effectively together over a sustained period to facilitate the effective delivery (so to speak) of a desired outcome. In such a scenario it is undoubtedly the relations of the medical team, patient, organizational systems and a whole host of other factors that make leadership far more than the personal qualities or intrinsic intentionality of any one of the individuals involved (although a high degree of professional competence and ability is also clearly essential).

... [L]ooking for a 'leader' within a 20-hour plus delivery (and the antenatal care preceding and postnatal care following this 'event') is somewhat meaningless. In such a case the responsibility passes between members of the medical and support teams in a more fluid manner as the situation evolves. Instead of a 'magic bullet', leadership is tied to the way we make reference to the 'leader'. Changing our reference could change our identification of/with the leader.

SOURCE: Bolden, R., Wood, M. and Gosling, J. (2006) 'Is the NHS Leadership Qualities Framework missing the wood for the trees?' in Casebeer, A.L., Harrison, A. and Mark, A.L. (eds) *Innovations in Health Care: A Reality Check*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bolden et al. (2006; Bolden and Gosling 2006) believe that mainstream theories promote notions of leadership that are crudely 'tearing apart' leadership relationships, and putting them into discrete binaries, including those such as leader and follower. To remedy this they propose adopting a leadership approach that is focused on meanings and understandings and treating leadership as one form of social influence that is embedded in institutional contexts in which relations, connections, dependencies and reciprocities are important parts of giving shape and substance to leadership as an emergent and socially constructed phenomenon. As Bolden et al. (2006:154) suggest, '[Rather] like the (in)famous story of the NASA janitor who, when asked, claimed that his job was about putting a man on the moon, it is quite conceivable that everyone has a role to play in the process of "leadership" and equally inconceivable that the "leader" could achieve the outcome without their contribution.' They term this a 'process studies perspective' in which the focus is no longer on an individual leader but on processes of social influence in situated contexts or a *post-individualistic* approach to leadership (Bolden et al. 2006; also see Denis et al. 1996; Dent 2003). In such an approach, leadership is interwoven in social practices and is always in the process of being formulated or in the 'making' as part of a particular stage or scene (see Grint 2000).

Bolden and Gosling (2006: 154) also describe leadership as a language game in which leadership qualities and competencies can be used discursively (that is, as a useful vocabulary) to help people make sense of and negotiate the meanings of leadership in ways that will help them collectively articulate and express their priorities. As a social process, leadership is mediated by discursive processes mentioned above. Martin Wood (2005) also advocates a process perspective but develops his argument in terms of the ontological assumptions made by previous leadership studies, arguing that interactive studies need to make sure that they have made the necessary onto-

logical shift in order to avoid making the mistakes of the past in deferring to individual actors and discrete schemes of relations in interaction. The fallacy that Wood identifies is a version of what Alfred North Whitehead (1967a) called the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' (see Exhibit 10.4), in which processes become regarded as things, and a relational process such as leadership, which is constantly emergent and *becoming*, is treated as though it were a thing, with consistent and stable qualities of *being*. What Wood argues is exactly the danger that Hans Hansen et al. (2007) seem to court with their version of aesthetic leadership: while they are cautious in relating new developments to past work, connections with attribution theory and positive psychology, in which there is no move towards relational ontology, or ontologies of becoming, risk robbing aesthetics of the very flow that gives it its significance (Guillet de Monthoux et al. 2007).

EXHIBIT 10.4
The fallacy of misplaced concreteness

When we establish the personal identity of leaders we often do so in relation to a set of distinguishing qualities. Such normative qualities can fill followers with longing, desire, and envy, which in turn require regulation, control, denial, exclusion, or, alternatively, sublimation and catharsis. By focusing on the individual leader as the omniscient character of those qualities, however, we might be colluding in extant power relations. For Whitehead (1967a, p. 51), this individualistic way of thinking is an example of the error of mistaking our abstract conceptualizations for the concrete things themselves: *the fallacy of misplaced concreteness*. To overcome this, it is necessary to explore and question the conventional view that an individual social actor's 'identity' can obtain in a secure and concrete sense, without any reference to past, present and future events. Whitehead attempts to do this by deliberately reframing the individual social actor as 'a mode of attention', one that only provides 'the extreme of selective emphasis' (Whitehead 1967b p. 270).

SOURCE: Extracted from Martin Wood (2005) 'The Fallacy of Misplaced Leadership', *Journal of Management Studies* **42**:6 September, pp. 1104–5.

Leadership and gender

A critical approach to gender regards it as a potentially significant feature of organizing '*regardless of whether or not such activity appears to be about gender*' (Fairhurst 2007: 106, citing Ashcraft and Mumby 2004). Leadership is just such an activity, and no critical account of leadership can ignore its gendered dimensions although much research has done and continues to do so (see also Chapter 2). Earlier research on women and leadership has been summarized by Fiona Wilson (1995: 172–8), and was updated by in Heather Höpfl and Peter Case's edited volume in 2007 (Höpfl and Case 2007). Wilson points out that the study of leadership (or power) has rarely included sex or sex roles as organizationally significant variables. Höpfl and Case (2007:163) note that 'Leadership is a seductive topic: Yet in most texts, women are merely subsumed'. Leaders seem to be not only male, but quite masculine with it, and where women and leadership is a topic in texts on leadership, it is usually treated as a separate chapter. In other words, women are not integrated into the mainstream theorizing of leadership. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that most theories of leadership have ignored gender (see the discussion in Chapter 2). Moreover, as Collinson (2005, citing Bowring 2004) points out, the binary between leaders and followers is reproduced in the age-old *gender dualism* between men and women where men have been viewed as the universal, neutral subject and women as the marginalized, often invisible 'other'. Even in the emerging field of corporate social

responsibility (CSR), women already have little presence in the mainstream and speak with marginalized voices (Marshall 2007: 177).

Judy Rosener, in researching prominent leaders across a number of countries, found men tended to describe themselves in ways consistent with 'transactional' leadership. They viewed their performance as a series of transactions with subordinates, involving rewards and punishment, or what are really exchange relationships. Women in the study described themselves in ways consistent with transformational leadership (Rosener 1990: 120), although with different emphases from the masculine heroic image. Among the transformational qualities women favoured were: interactive leadership or participation; making people feel important and energized; sharing information and power; and placing less emphasis on formal authority (that is, status, position). A similar study in the UK found that women reported themselves as catalyst or visionary leaders, while the men were traditionalist leaders (see Wilson 1995). In a US study, Florence Denmark (1993) also found that women were perceived to be more democratic than men, that is, they encouraged more participation in decision making. Denmark also found that when women behaved autocratically (or like many male managers might), they were viewed more negatively by both men and women. Women who occupied leadership positions traditionally held by men were more devalued by male evaluators. Yet men rated women superiors higher in leadership qualities than did women (Denmark 1993: 353–5).

But the differences are less clear when we look at how subordinates perceive men and women leaders. Wilson noted that other women subordinates responded differently to the same behaviour, depending on whether it was displayed by a man or a woman. Wilson also noted that consideration behaviours displayed by a woman leader tended to be more favourably evaluated, and women subordinates preferred a more democratic style of leadership and sought greater involvement in decision making (Wilson 1995: 173). Exhibit 10.5 summarizes some research findings on female leaders.

EXHIBIT 10.5
Characteristics of female leaders

Research has found female leaders to be:

- accommodative or affiliative (close to those people they interact with)
- less self-enhancing
- more self-disclosing
- more vulnerable
- willing to admit to lack of self-confidence
- willing to express emotions
- more positive in giving encouragement, support and information
- less assertive
- better communicators
- better at reading non-verbal behaviour
- more sensitive and socially objective
- more cooperative and democratic
- better group facilitators and consultants.

SOURCE: Adapted from Fiona Wilson (1995) *Organizational Behaviour and Gender*, London: McGraw-Hill, pp. 173–6.

Interestingly, women appear to perceive power (hence influence) differently from men, seeing it as a liberating force in the community (that is, capacity, competence and energy) rather than as a means of controlling and dominating others, and therefore they tend to be non-aggressive and more concerned for the welfare of others (Huxham 1996: 22, citing Hartsock 1985). Men, on the other hand, are more likely to seek to maintain distance from their subordinates in order to maintain status, to be instrumental and task-oriented, and more dominant, self-assured, directive, precise and quick to challenge others. These views are echoed by Judith Pringle (1994: 136–7) who cites research from the USA (Helgesen 1990 and Astin and Leland 1991) which supports the view that women do interpret and represent their leadership styles as being different from those often portrayed as being masculine, particularly in terms of power. Women, she says, describe a leader as someone who plays a catalytic empowering role, and who works to create a collective effort to improve the quality of life of those who work for them. There are also men who would identify with this more 'feminine' version of leadership.

Much of the research, however, does appear to indicate that there may be considerable pressure on both men and women to conform to stereotypes held by subordinates. Richard Scase and Robert Goffee (1990) also argued that the reportedly preferred managerial styles of both men and women are influenced by prevailing fads and fashions about effective management. In a study carried out in the 1980s, when assertiveness became popularly valued, 88 per cent of women managers surveyed claimed to be tough, aggressive, firm and assertive, while less than 50 per cent mentioned being open, cooperative and consultative. Additionally, people's appearance is important to the way in which people respond to them as leaders and it is an advantage to look mature rather than glamorous or even 'sexy'. This may have affected the power-dressing fashion of the 1980s (Brewis et al. 1997).

It seems clear, though, that however difficult it may be to determine a feminine or a definitively masculine managerial style of leadership, women do display skills and behaviours that complement, and sometimes challenge, those traditionally displayed by men. It is quite possible that as organizations change in style and structure, even the concept of 'leader' may change. But before this happens there will need to be more serious critical analysis of the masculinist domination of the discourse about leadership, as Marta Calás and Linda Smircich (1995) reveal (see also Chapter 2). We might well ask: Why have leadership studies neglected gender issues or sought to represent the differences between men and women as a 'negative difference' for women in management (Sinclair 1998)? Why is it that 'when women do achieve leadership positions it is precisely by suspending the qualities which, according to the theories, appear to characterize twenty-first century leadership' (Höpfl and Case 2007: 161)?

At the beginning of the chapter we asked the question: 'Are women and men different as leaders?' This question is really about how the differences between men and women are constructed or represented in the first place, and how these differences have influenced leadership theories. If men dominate leadership positions, as we have already established in Chapter 2, then women are always the subordinate term in the leadership equation, and their rise to leadership assumes their doing as well as, if not better, than men to succeed. To be able to lead often means women outperforming male leaders. Alternatively, it means women are constantly battling to establish *relational authenticity*, which means toning down the extremes of their femininity or their masculinity so that the men around them are not uncomfortable or that they do not stymie the identification processes that support patriarchal relations (Fairhurst 2007: 106).

None of the theories of leadership examined in this chapter have been developed with the specific intention of recognizing gender difference, including narcissism (Fairhurst 2007: 105–6; Pullen and Rhodes 2008). Even contingency theorists treated the context or the situation as unproblematic in terms of diversity because 'leaders' were all the same in each category, irrespective of gender or sexuality, and 'context' was not regarded as gendered either. Leadership theories have pretended gender neutrality or displayed gender blindness but have inevitably imported male values and characteristics as the norm, and have been *phallocentric* – viewing the world implicitly from a masculine point of view (Höpfl and Matila 2007).

Studies such as those of Rosener or Denmark simply reaffirm that differences in leadership styles arise from special feminine qualities, excluding men from possessing such qualities or feeling legitimate in displaying them. They also support the view that these qualities are somehow 'inferior' and can never appear adequate when measured, consciously or unconsciously, against a masculine yardstick. In the heroic genre of leadership theories, women always stand to lose, given the representations of leadership traits and qualities that prevail, unless they adopt heroic traits that will always be precariously valued by men and would be seen as 'unnatural' for women. It is not only heroic leadership that poses problems for women: so do theories of narcissistic leadership, because they present it as unnatural and unthinkable for women to be narcissists. Fairhurst (2007: 103–6, citing Ludeman and Erlandson 2004) argues that while the *alpha male* leadership style is thought to represent some 70 per cent of US executives, executive coaching programmes in the USA that have burgeoned to promote authentic leadership amongst men fail to include women as potential alpha females. She gives the example of a management development programme in the USA that claims one of its aims is not to turn narcissists into '"unrecognizable powder puffs" with unsuitable feminine qualities' (Fairhurst 2007: 105, citing Ludeman and Erlandson 2004: 6). Fairhurst turns to a *Fortune* magazine article on 'America's toughest bosses' to give a gendered reading of narcissism and authentic leadership. The article mentioned profiled Linda Wachner, CEO of apparel company Warnaco from 1986 to 2001, as one of the seven toughest bosses in the USA. The following is an excerpt from what was said about Wachner, followed by what she had to say in a subsequent interview about the article.

CASE EXAMPLE **Linda Wachner**

She was described … by colleagues as 'Smart, impatient … rewards employees but demands absolute fealty … a screamer who's not above swearing like a trooper.' One time she reportedly lashed out a meeting of executives from the women's apparel clothing group. Angered by their performance, she declared, 'You're eunuchs. How can your wives stand you? You've got nothing between your legs.' At another meeting she suggested to a new executive that he start firing people for no other reason except to underscore how serious he would be about performance issues.

Ms Wachner replied:
'I've yelled at people, and I am not ashamed of it. We have to run this company efficiently and without a bunch of babies who say, "Mommy yelled at me today." It's impossible to run a leveraged operation like a camp. If you don't like it, leave. It's not a prison.'

SOURCE: Gail T. Fairhurst (2007) *Discursive Leadership: In Conversation with Leadership Psychology*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p. 104.

Fairhurst says Wachner figuratively neuters her male colleagues, renders them powerless as children, and adjudicates all matters from the authority position of a 'mommy'. This she says qualifies her to be considered as a narcissist. Fairhurst (2005: 104–8) says any attribution about Wachner being a narcissist is contestable because

it presents only one account of what it means to be a narcissist as distinct from being an authentic, self-aware leader, which is far from being gender neutral either (see Sinclair 2007: 109). She says it is important to understand that people draw on competing, contradictory and conflicting discourses to create their identities as a leader or follower (see also Sinclair 2007: Chapter 8) and that identities are multi-layered and narcissism is only one project of the self (Fairhurst 2007: 8). In the case of Wachner, Fairhurst says she draws on the emasculating matriarchy genre as a discursive strategy to negate the masculinity of others – her male colleagues (nothing between their legs, eunuchs and mommy's boys or 'sissies') – and this (the emasculating, ball-crushing, superwoman!) is precisely how masculine discourses often portray powerful women such as Wachner. Fairhurst believes that invoking this discursive strategy might provide Wachner with a 'resistant space' – maybe the only one she has in what might otherwise be an oppressive patriarchal and masculine dominated discourse of leadership in Warnaco. It might also provide her with a 'recalcitrant identity' ('I am not ashamed'; 'It's not a prison') (Fairhurst 2007: 108) that she actually wants to project of herself in the face of inevitable public vilification set aside for women such as herself (see Chapter 2). Sinclair concurs with this, suggesting that people, including leaders, find ways to resist the processes by which their personhood and experience of self are defined for them and they can do this through subtle, conscious and unconscious modes of resistance, including cynicism, avoidance and sabotage (Sinclair 2007: 142).

Fairhurst argues that in the case of Wachner, the gendered nature of leadership discourses makes her claims to any form of authenticity (a more feminine one maybe) difficult to pull off and would most likely prove counterproductive. In a similar vein, Sinclair draws on Alice Eagly's work on authentic leadership to suggest that the same behaviours used by men to signal authentic leadership are unlikely to produce similar results when used by female leaders (Sinclair 2007, citing Eagly 2005). She says Eagly shows that authenticity is far from being gender neutral because it is read differently depending on whether or not it is women or men who are trying to be authentic leaders. Authenticity serves also to focus on individual accounts of failure or success at achieving self-awareness and a particular leadership style. It does not pay sufficient attention to the fact that authenticity is socially produced and accomplished, and stereotypes, myths, cultural norms and power play their part in locking people into tightly scripted performances often not of their making or to their advantage, as is the case with many women (Sinclair 2007: 137–8).

For the concept of leadership to be inclusive of gender requires questioning the assumptions behind how differences are presented and represented in everyday organizations, especially by critiquing the cult of individual leadership that is so powerfully ingrained in the leadership discourse. It would mean seriously considering how to be more inclusive of women's experiences of themselves, both in terms of their gender and sexuality, as well as of those men who no longer identify with the popular imagery of leadership or masculinity. It would also mean developing concepts of leadership that do not implicitly set men against women as natural or normative opposites based on biological differences, socially developed notions of superiority and inferiority or socialization (see Chapter 2). It also requires that we do not homogenize the experiences and discourses of leadership, treating all men and women the same way. For example, Jackie Ford (2006), who studied the narrative accounts of leadership amongst senior executives in the UK public sector, found that men and women alike drew on both traditional and post-heroic discourses of leadership as well as professional and social–family ones resulting in contradictory and competing accounts of leadership. Within these discourses there were clear traces of gender

effects, with women, for example, not expecting to gain promotion as quickly as men. However, Ford points out that discourses of leadership are fluid and embedded in social conditions, and in the identity work of these managers, differing subjectivities dominated depending on how the speakers oscillated between the different discourses. Even though the post-heroic discourse was portrayed as presenting a more distributed, feminine and connected style of leadership (and was seen as a dominant discourse of the organization), it was only partly appropriated in the narrative accounts of these managers. Multiple speaking positions were adopted opening the space for resistance as well as accommodation of selected aspects of the dominant discourses. As she says, 'The experiential views of these managers illustrate significant contradictions, plurality and ambiguity, which serves to dismantle the dominant hegemony and ready stereotypes which favour notions of simple unitary lives' (2006: 96; see also Ford and Harding 2007).

New approaches to leadership have to emphasize how men and women can and do work side by side, complementing, strengthening and elevating each other to achieve as leaders or followers and how this occurs as a social practice rather than an individual quality that has historically been skewed to favour masculinist discourses of leadership (Lämsä and Sintonen 2001).

Cross-cultural dimensions of leadership

A relatively neglected dimension of leadership and leader development is its culture boundedness (Jones 2006). As argued in Chapter 2, the knowledge project in which early management theorists were engaged was about the identification of universal principles which were context-free – thus gender was suppressed and so was culture. Indeed, one reason why scientific management was so popular was that it proved a very efficient method of rapidly getting large numbers of non-English-speaking immigrant workers, who were pouring into the USA to man the meat processing plants of Chicago, and the new manufactories that took them as their model, to a level of operational competence. At a technical level, at which much of scientific management was involved, some of these principles were readily adaptable to other countries, including the USSR and Japan. In fact, Akio Morita, the former president of Sony Corporation, is reputed to have said: 'US and Japanese management are 95 per cent the same, and differ in all important respects. What he meant was that culture was the five per cent difference; the rest was methods, technology and structure.

Leadership, then, falls into the 5 per cent, and as Geert Hofstede (1992) argues, the very theories which purport to be universalistic are in fact shaped significantly by the fact that they were developed by US theorists in the USA. He also argues that if we want to know whether US theories apply abroad, there is no need to test them before we can reach a view – looking at the key characteristics of different cultures according to his model will predict whether there will be difficulties and what those difficulties are likely to be.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Hofstede developed a measure of culture on four dimensions and, later, with Michael Bond, added a fifth. These were power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, individualism/collectivism, and long-term/short-term orientation. It is claimed that differences in these national dimensions will affect the way leaders see their role and also the way subordinates perceive it – in fact, the differences in subordinate perception are most significant because it is these assumptions that will make it difficult for a manager from a different culture to operate in a new one. We have identified the general criticisms of Hofstede's research in Chapter 3, but one problem with much of this theorizing is that it

was at the national level and could never have accounted for the complex and varied ways in which culture is played out at the organizational, group or team levels.

Most US leadership theories tend to advocate, implicitly or explicitly, participation by subordinates in decision making, but the initiative in extending participation is the manager's (Hofstede 1980/1992). This is consistent with a medium power distance culture such as the USA. In a high power distance culture, such as Hong Kong, the manager's authority would not be shared, and in a low power distance culture, such as Scandinavia, participation would be seen as the norm, not a managerial option (see Chapters 3 and 11). Another dimension that affects this is uncertainty avoidance – in a low uncertainty avoidance country, such as Sweden, local experiments in democracy are encouraged and, if successful, become regulations, but in a high uncertainty avoidance country, such as Germany, the regulatory framework (laws and so on) has to come first.

Hofstede (1980/1992: 113–18) discusses the problems in imposing management techniques associated with leadership styles which have an implicit cultural bias. An example might be the case of self-managed work teams (see Chapter 11), which assumes medium power distance (negotiations are meaningful, employees not too weak), weak uncertainty avoidance (that is, willing to take risks) and high masculinity (performance orientation). Hofstede also notes the difficulties of operating with subordinates with differing cultural biases from the manager, pointing out that often subordinates from high power distance cultures, such as those in Asia, prefer autocratic Theory X leadership. But of course, an Asian version of what appears to be Theory X is not necessarily the same thing and, as even the early leadership studies showed, once accustomed to a particular style of leadership, subordinates need time to adjust. Furthermore, if in other areas of their lives autocratic relations remain dominant, this will create tensions, Nevertheless, there are enough counterexamples to warrant caution in these assumptions. David McClelland (1961) found variations on the need for achievement, an important factor in leadership style, between Turkey (3.62) and Belgium (0.43) (see Chapter 9). Such a wide variation across cultures questions whether we can meaningfully use the same term for 'leadership' in Turkey and Belgium. The more complex combinations of cultural factors may require that the concept of leadership be replaced altogether with a different concept, such as 'influence'. However, we need to keep in mind that there will always be variations within nations regarding these cultural dimensions and, as stated in Chapter 3, a whole range of experiences might predispose a manager to act or behave outside cultural expectations and norms (see Triandis 1995).

Robert Westwood (1992) identifies one particularly common alternative model to the Western leadership model in the East. This is the model of headship or paternalism. The paternalistic leadership style characteristic of Southeast Asia, especially in small businesses, is derived from cultures with a high level of power distance, and hence tends to be more directive and autocratic. It has the combination of characteristics shown in Exhibit 10.6.

EXHIBIT 10.6
Paternal leadership style

- **Dependence orientation of subordinates** The acceptance of hierarchy and the concept of filial piety lead to the cultural norm of conforming to headship and dependence on the patriarch.
- **Personalism** Personal relationships play a more important role in governing behaviour than formal systems and rules.

- **Moral leadership** The leader is assumed to possess virtues such as humanity and integrity as a requirement in his role. He must act as a model and be worthy of respect.
- **Harmony building** Part of the leadership role is to build and maintain harmony. The leader should be sensitive to the feelings of subordinates.
- **Conflict diffusion** The leader needs to make sure that conflicts are prevented from happening.
- **Social distance** The leader tends to stay at a social distance from the subordinates to preserve his father-like authority.
- **Didactic leadership** The leader is assumed to be the master who possesses the necessary knowledge and information and is expected to act like a teacher.
- **Dialogue ideal** A subtle and informal communication is expected so that the leader can signal his intentions and be aware of the sentiments and views of the subordinate.

SOURCE: Robert Westwood (1992) *Organizational Behaviour*, Hong Kong: Longmans Group (FE), pp. 121–41.

EXHIBIT 10.7
Paternal leadership tactics

- **Centralization** The leader, as part of the autocratic elements of his leadership, will not allow much involvement of subordinates in the decision-making process.
- **Non-specific intentions** The leader will not be explicit in revealing his intentions and expectations.
- **Secrecy** The leader will always keep certain information or knowledge to himself.
- **Avoidance of formality** The leader will avoid turning the way of doing things through relations into formal procedures.
- **Protection of dominance** The leader will seek to protect his authority position through playing down the importance of the subordinates, altering the responsibility requirements at will, making subjective evaluation of subordinate performance and so on.
- **Patronage and nepotism** The leader will use his position power and the resources at his disposal to do selective favours for the subordinates. Family members or those linked to the leader are often appointed to key positions.
- **Non-emotional ties** The leader will avoid emotional bonds with the subordinates to shield his dignity and to evade obligations.
- **Political manipulation** The leader controls the group through differential treatment of the individuals.
- **Reputation building** The leader will be very concerned about building and protecting his reputation, especially in external ties with business associates.

SOURCE: Robert Westwood (1992) *Organizational Behaviour*, Hong Kong: Longmans Group (FE), pp. 121–41.

The adoption of this style also leads to the use of some very specific behaviours and tactics which keep the father-figure leader – and you will notice that we deliberately use the pronoun 'he' throughout this section when referring to the leader – in unchallenged authority, as described in Exhibit 10.7.

Now, it might be useful to pause a moment to consider this question: In what ways is the 'paternalistic style of leadership' commonly demonstrated by small business owners in Southeast Asia different from the 'autocratic' style discussed in the Western world? You should be able to answer this question by reviewing the above material.

Conclusion

Leadership is widely regarded as a central determinant of organizational performance but it is a difficult concept to tie down. Trait and style approaches have proved

limited in utility, while the contingency perspective threatens to become paralysed by the volume of possible contingent factors, although the latter approach has value in establishing that there is no 'one best way' to lead in all situations. These approaches tend to focus on leadership as supervisory style. An alternative approach is to see leadership as political and strategic influence, centred on such activities as building and maintaining networks, creating and perpetuating a sense of purpose, enabling and empowering followers and basically sharing the power and glory of leadership. Post-heroic leadership questions the importance of leadership as something that belongs to a lone hero manager.

Nonetheless, most leadership training still focuses on the concept of style within a contingency/situational framework. As such it is subject to an extremely basic criticism: that style is simply one aspect of leadership. Perhaps such training is relatively harmless, but the focus on styles as manifest in leadership training may have its darker side. Underlying the style perspective is a perspective on organizations which assumes that once the most appropriate styles of leadership are known, first, selections will take place guided by this knowledge and, second, leadership styles will be changed as a result of training. This ignores some fundamental aspects of organizational life.

The selection of leaders is embedded in the complex politics of organizational life and the qualification of having an appropriate leadership style as designated by current theory constitutes merely one claim for selection. Embedded commitments and established images of the 'right sort' are likely to be more formidable bases for selection. The rules of the organizational world, as presumed in leadership training, are often at odds with the reality of organizational practice. Second, leaders are not merely free agents who can choose to change their leadership style as a result of training-based 'enlightenment'. Enmeshed in the organization, the individual leader is constrained both positively and negatively. Pressures to conform to the expectations of peers, subordinates and superiors are likely to affect the actual behaviour of leaders (Pfeffer 1978: 20). This applies equally to men and women.

Our discussion of the narcissistic leader also illustrates the point that managers as leaders do not 'park their emotions at the door' when they come to work, including their egos. As Huey (1994) and Collins (2001) remind us, much of the post-heroic leadership agenda requires that many managers say 'no' to their egos. We have also identified a post-heroic leadership agenda in organizations. There is a tendency in the popular literature to suggest that post-heroic leadership is the next 'one best way' for managing or leading in the new age of the knowledge worker. The exemplary leadership approach, while countering heroic leadership approaches, still reaffirms a trait approach and leaves us little the wiser about followership and distributed and collective forms of leadership.

We have proposed an alternative view to dominant leadership approaches by adopting a critical, discursive and relational approach to leadership. This entails acknowledging leadership as a socially constructed process in which relational patterns are co-created. By focusing on the social and cultural context, on the subject and actor, an encompassing view of power, and reflexive agency, the differences between mainstream theories were identified. In the constructionist approach used in this section all accounts of leadership are treated discursively. By presenting three different versions of this approach to leadership we were able to highlight the paradoxes of leadership and the acts of leadership that are needed to pull off a leadership performance. We also pointed out that it is through rhetorical devices of followers and others, including leaders themselves, that leadership is created and such things as qualities and capabilities are given meaning. Each of the three approaches challenges

the reader to think differently about leadership and how they experience it in their everyday lives.

We also showed how leadership is a gendered construct in which certain binaries have dominated and have acted to distort and marginalize the role and contribution of women in various leadership discourses and the effect this has on leadership practices. The precarious and risky nature of women appropriating particular identities to manage their leadership roles was discussed and the importance of presenting leadership in terms of accommodating and valuing multiple identities was stressed to address gender differences. Other differences, such as cultural ones, were also noted to highlight how leadership is framed to exclude and marginalize the experiences, knowledge and understandings of particular categories of people so that a privileged view of leadership dominates, which we have described as a Western-centric, masculinist representation of leadership. Addressing these issues is essential to taking a critical approach to leadership.

Answers to questions about leadership

1. **Why do we have such a fascination with leaders?** One of the dominant themes in leadership research has been the role played by heredity and traits in the shaping of leadership qualities, particularly the drive or need for power. People are fascinated by power and those who wield it. As we said above, there are charismatic forms of leadership, including narcissistic leadership, that feed off the needs of followers. Views tend to polarize around the 'born leader' versus the trained or 'made leader' but the mass media and in particular the popular management journals do promulgate images that present leadership as synonymous with glamour, power and influence. Certainly, the popularity of the transformational leadership image of the 1980s lent renewed support to the trait theory and the larger than life hero. While the idea of post-heroic leadership has become more popular, the image that persists is still that of the heroic. The post-heroic leadership idea supports leadership teams, rotating leadership positions and generally sharing power and spreading it around. Yet many large companies seem less able to embrace the idea of post-heroic leadership because the old dominant ideas are difficult to unsettle. There are also just enough real-life examples of leaders who are happy to play up to the mythology of the charismatic hero, regardless of how they operate in practice, because being taken at face value gives them more room to manoeuvre politically behind the scenes. Indeed, the exploitation of mass media has allowed corporations like McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken to create kitsch 'virtual leaders' – Ronald McDonald and Colonel Harland Sanders – who simulate transformational leadership and actually perform important functions for the company: Ronald McDonald is listed among the corporate officers of McDonald's as *Chief Happiness Officer* and *Ambassador for an Active Lifestyle* (Boje and Rhodes 2005). And we consumers lap it up. Academic fascination with leadership seems to derive largely from the fact that leadership is a convenient catch-all for those things that can't be captured and measured when we attempt to explain business success, especially turnarounds, and its very elusiveness is seductive (Hansen et al. 2007: 544). But if we look at Ronald McDonald as a leader, perhaps we should ask: Who is really being fooled (Linstead 2002)?

2. **Can any manager be a leader?** The answer to this question depends on the school of leadership thought to which one subscribes. Early theories of leadership were definitely focused on selecting the born leader and nurturing *him* to greatness. The style and contingency theorists had strong views on the malleability or adaptability of leadership styles. In their view, all managers had leader-

ship potential, although Fiedler was firmly of the view that it was horses for courses. Transformational leadership reinforced the view that leaders were special, charismatic and different to managers, and this is still a widely held and taught view. From this perspective everyone might be a leader, but most could not aspire to be more than transactional. The post-heroic leadership literature has tried to dispel the notion of a single heroic leader running the organization and has proposed instead more broad leadership development across the organization – we all have to be leaders now, but maybe not all the time. The performance of organizations adopting a post-heroic style or approach to leadership needs to be evaluated further as the approach grows. Exemplary leadership reinforces a trait approach and in much of this theorizing, women are certainly excluded. However we have also presented alternative views to leadership that suggest that it is discursively created through discourses of leadership. We have proposed that a critical approach views leadership as a process in which leadership can be read as a performance which is reproduced, constructed and even distorted through rhetorical devices of people who present accounts or stories of leadership. In the process view, leadership is socially enacted and is the work of many people even if part of the discourse draws on stories and accounts of individual leadership.

3. **What does it mean to lead?** Leadership is also a product of, or is defined in terms of, the problems or circumstances facing an organization. We suggest that the notion of leading is related to the power to generate meanings, and events, that followers will appreciate and act upon. The particular form of influence chosen or practised by leaders or leadership teams will be different depending on circumstances, but it can't be ever extracted from its context or the experiences of the participants. Leading need not be individualized either because some theorists propose that leadership is the work of every one if adaptive challenges are what it must respond to. We are also reminded that many of the qualities of post-heroic leadership are often nothing more than the qualities needed to do the everyday work that the majority of people would agree makes sense to enact (Sashkin 1992: 155; Lawler 2005). The discourse of strong, visionary leadership, from this perspective, is another discourse to alternative discourses of leadership such as even proposing to adopt a post-heroic agenda. There will also be those organizations that will adopt the 'post-heroic' discourse, but leadership will be imbued with heroic discourses and discursive practices.

4. **Are women and men different in how they lead?** When it comes to the question of gender and leadership, research lends some support to the idea that men and women are different as leaders. However, on close examination of this evidence, there is no clear indication as to why this should be, and the idea of there being a masculine style versus a feminine style is very difficult to support. Even the idea of the androgynous leader who has both male and female characteristics is rather superficial, and further problems occur when we recognize that perceived behaviour reported by managers varies from that reported by subordinates, and female managers are just as influenced by fads and the need to appear to be doing the right thing as anyone else. What this means is that there *are* differences, but we need more studies of actual women leaders at work, in context, rather than more surveys, in order to understand better the field of interacting forces in which they operate.

5. **Can leaders change their styles or behaviours?** This question has troubled leadership research since it began. While there is no need to assume that a best way of leading in a particular situation can be unequivocally identified or that all managers need to be able to adopt different approaches when necessary, a rela-

tional approach suggests that leadership will always be a product of adaptation to the other, sometimes in subtle, sometimes in not-so-subtle ways. There is also no reason to assume that leaders don't learn anything about leading through practising it, and aren't modifying what they do constantly at some level. But with the most extreme examples of narcissistic leaders, or where leaders display some pathological traits, it is reasonable to assume that they would find it very difficult to change without therapy. Habits and assumptions that are taken for granted, like culture, need to be surfaced before change can begin, and this is not easy to achieve either. Organizations tend to reward certain styles of leadership and politically it is often displaying these styles that ensures career success. So from a social constructionist point of view the question becomes even more problematic, and the answer is both 'yes' and 'no', with a generous helping of 'it depends' thrown in.

6. **What are the alternatives to Western paradigms of leadership?** Issues of diversity and the pressures of globalization no longer make it sensible to subscribe to one dominant model of leadership. Many leadership approaches have also been gender- or culture-blind. Leadership is very much a relational product of the societies in which organizations operate. Cultural variables will affect how managers from different cultural backgrounds manage in foreign cultures and with culturally diverse groups. In the 1980s, for example, Japanese organizations were very much seen as offering universalized alternative approaches to Western styles of leadership but even these were never practised in the same way from one company to another and were hard to transplant to other contexts where meanings and understandings were different, although they did have impact on those contexts. We also need to be aware that different approaches to leadership that have so far received relatively little general attention exist globally and these may offer significant challenges to leadership thinking as it currently exists.

REVISITING THE CASE STUDY

1 How would you characterize Ruud Gullit's leadership style?
He seems to be very task- and structure-oriented so, in Blake and Mouton's terms, he would rate high on this factor and probably low to medium on people, given that he seemed to be driving some of his players away, making it an authority–compliance basic style. In Likert's terms, he would be somewhere between S1 and S2, but Fiedler would suggest that this style was appropriate for the 'crisis' which NUFC was arguably facing. Of course, whether this style is appropriate for a CEO every day is questionable. Hersey and Blanchard would categorize the behaviour as S1 or S2, but the followers in this case are highly skilled and experienced professionals.

2 What considerations seem to be most important to Gullit?
Clearly, bringing things under his own personal control seems to be at the centre of his plan. His own personal style seems to be an issue, and to that extent his approach seems to be narcissistic. Those theories which suggest that leaders need to change styles imply that leadership is a performance, but they tend to underestimate the wider audience for that performance – in this case the supporters, shareholders and directors. Gullit seems to divorce the football club from its wider context and only engages with footballing matters.

3 What kinds of relationships would you expect Gullit to have with:
(a) his players?
Gullit appears to have difficult relations with some of his players, but these seem to stem from his own inflexibility and his requirement for the players to be flexible. He seems somewhat intolerant of players who do not have the skills which he had and the ability to play 'total football' in any position. He spends little time communicating, and doesn't help them to understand why they are not in the team or what they need to do to get back into it. He has a firm idea of what players should do, and he seems unable to get the best out of a squad. He splits the squad, as LMX (leader–member exchange) theory might recognize, by having his in-group of 'lovely boys'. Indeed he seems quite intimidatory in the way he almost writes people off and manages some of them by 'Theory F' where the 'F' is for fear (see Linstead and Chan 1994).

(b) the fans?
His relationship with the fans, who were prepared to hero-worship him, was spoiled by his inability to understand and respect their history and background. They expected total commitment to the club and the region, but got an absentee manager who had no affection for the city or the region, and indeed was unable to understand the centuries of rivalry between Newcastle and Sunderland which stretched back to the English

Civil War in the seventeenth century. Gullit's focus on the task rather than the culture badly affected these relationships.

(c) the board of directors?

Gullit's arrogance would not necessarily affect a board of directors as long as he was bringing them success – Newcastle was one of the world's richest clubs, and a business success, but had not had much success on the field of play in recent years. Shareholders, sponsors and supporters alike expected him to deliver. This became much more of a problem when he spent large amounts of the club's money only to bring in players who seemed unable to fit in – or who he failed to blend as a team.

4 How do you think Gullit would think that it is appropriate to develop future football managers?

Gullit seems unable to take a developmental approach, and to help players improve – if they don't make the grade in his eyes, he rejects them, even players who left to become star players at big clubs like Leeds and Liverpool and to win international caps for England, Germany and Ireland. He seems to have little patience and one might expect that his 'you can do it or you can't' approach to managing would make the idea of developing the next manager redundant. When the club made it known that they expected Shearer to one day become manager, there were clear tensions.

5 How would you characterize the leadership approach at NUFC?

If we were using mainstream approaches then we would probably ask ourselves if Gullit is a transactional or transformational leader. Using this approach we could say that he sees himself as driving change, even being radical, but with a rather fixed set of views about what players should do and how they should relate to their manager. However, he is more than transactional as he is breaking up the routines, although it seems that at Chelsea he became transactional when he lost interest. He is certainly charismatic, and a little whimsical. At times he seems to combine styles, such as conservative transformational or radical transactional, where change is an extreme reassertion of older, perhaps forgotten principles. Certainly he seems as though he wants to be heroic, but can't quite get people to love him enough, perhaps because he is insufficiently post-heroic to relax his principles and involve them in his plans.

If we were to characterize his leadership in a constitutive approach then we would say that he has not understood the paradoxes of leadership nor what constitutes acts of leadership. He is unable to forge a common identity, he can't stir the imaginations of his followers, he does not use power creatively or inventively, and he lacks the rhetorical and negotiating skills or other persuasive communication to pull off a leadership performance that also needs others to play their part. He has not dealt with the paradoxes of leadership. What we see here are the random acts and seeds of disorganization that emerge when the process of leading has broken down. Gullit plays at leadership heroics and this is his undoing because he cannot imagine or think how leadership might be a co-created process.

6 What culture or gender influences could have been operating in this situation?

Football, although it is a masculine game, is a game of egos as much as bodies, and confidence is as important as ability and fitness. Often, a manager needs to be capable of bullying and cajoling at times, and at others to be encouraging and supporting, displaying both tough masculine and softer, more motherly qualities to get the best out of all his squad at all times and in all situations, public and private, pressured or relaxed. Gullit's sexy football idea was based on some quite rigid masculine values, and he seemed to be unable to display the soft skills necessary to keep the confidence of his team high when things were not going well, and he was too ready to blame them for their position. Culturally, it is possible that Gullit's Dutch pragmatism, and tendency to go straight to the point without ceremony, which English people often find abrasive, also contributed to his failure to communicate with or understand his team, fans and bosses.

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Notes

1   The authors acknowledge Richard Dunford's significant contributions to the sections on 'McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y', 'The Michigan studies' and 'Blake's grid' based on earlier versions of the chapter (Dunford 1992b; Fulop et al. 1999; Fulop et al. 2004).

2   The authors acknowledge Richard Dunford's significant contribution to the 'Matching leader and situation' section based on earlier versions of the chapter (Dunford 1992b; Fulop et al. 1999; Fulop et al. 2004).

3   The authors acknowledge Richard Dunford's contribution to this section on 'Leadership substitutes' based on earlier versions of the chapter (Dunford 1992b; Fulop et al. 1999; Fulop et al. 2004).

4   The authors acknowledge Richard Dunford's contribution to the introductory paragraph, Exhibit 10.2 and the following short paragraph, based on earlier versions of the chapter (Dunford 1992b; Fulop et al. 1999; Fulop et al. 2004).