

THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES: HOW LEADERS CAN WORK WITH
SENSE CRAFTING

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Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Organizational Systems

by

Kira J. Swanson

San Francisco, California

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Abstract

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Kira J. Swanson

Saybrook University

We are facing an unprecedented level of interconnectedness that has engendered a level of complexity that defies our historical reasoning capacity. Building off of the literature on sensemaking, this action research study proposed and investigated a new concept in leadership to respond to the growing complexity: sensecrafting. Sensecrafting refers to deliberate, collective sensemaking, while sensemaking refers to “how [people] construct what they construct, why, and with what effects . . . “ (Weick, 1995, p. 4). The study answered the research question: How can individuals develop their capacity for sensecrafting in order to cultivate a more generative relationship with the organizations to which they belong? Employing Herda’s hermeneutic participatory research, the study consisted of three, 1-hour conversations with six research participants which were recorded via Skype and transcribed. The purpose of the study was to see how participants employed nine traits of sensecrafting (learning, tolerating ambiguity, discernment, openness, framing, mindfulness, envisioning, action and reflection) in the workplace. Additionally, the study investigated how participants worked with stories to create a generative working environment. In the study, participants worked with a set of 18 cards that presented techniques for enhancing their sensecrafting skills. A thematic analysis of

the study found that participants made frequent use of the sensecrafting traits at a personal level, and less frequent use of the traits at a collective level. The findings suggest that participants' possessed a high degree of potential to further develop their skills. Participants' exhibition of the sensecrafting traits generated value both for the individuals in the study and for their organizations. Benefits that accrued to individuals included improved relationships with key personnel and insights into how to cope with changes in the workplace. Implications from the study included the observation that a useful way to work with the sensecrafting traits would be through an instrument that measures participants on each of the dimensions of sensecrafting and that provides feedback to individuals about how they can capitalize on strengths and develop areas of opportunity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Our current times are characterized by accelerating complexity that we are ill equipped to handle. So says a study of 1,500 global chief executive officers interviewed in 2009 and 2010 by IBM as part of their fourth biennial survey (IBM, 2010). While these findings represent a new awareness amongst the survey's sample, several writers have presaged these circumstances since the last decades of the twentieth century. Macro forces such as the increased interdependency characterized by globalization drive escalating complexity. Disruptive technologies like the Internet and cell phones have changed the nature of relationships between systems, breaking down the relative independence of many systems to create enormously complex, interdependent mega-systems. For example, in 2010, the Internet unleashed the potential of individuals to voice dissent in Egypt, as protests organized through online social networks succeeded in unseating a political tyrant, Hosni Mubarak.

With this increased complexity, companies have been forced to confront the challenge of meeting customers' communications expectations. There has been an explosion of channels for consumers to communicate with companies, including email and chat, Facebook, and Twitter, and indirect means such as talking about a company on blogs or internet postings. The once ubiquitous call center, identifiable by its toll free phone number has now morphed into the contact center where customer service departments seek to keep pace with all the communication vehicles that consumers have at their disposal. New competencies are required as more written communication occurs (via email or chat), and new risks are attendant, when a response to one customer could potentially be read by millions. Online forums such as YouTube have given consumers unprecedented power in shaping corporate policy, as when United Airlines was forced to

change baggage-handling practices after a disgruntled customer posted a video of his song “United Breaks Guitars” (Carroll, 2009). As of April 2011, the video had over 10 million hits.

While this unprecedented level of interconnectedness has led to what some view as progress, it has also engendered a level of complexity that defies our historical reasoning capacity. The problems of our times are characterized by “collectively creat[ing] outcomes (and side effects) that nobody wants,” (Scharmer, 2007, p. 3). Senge noted in the Foreword to Scharmer’s work that complexity is witnessed in “the unfolding environmental and social breakdowns evident in climate change, political paralysis and corruption, spreading poverty, and the failures of mainstream institutions of education, health care, government and business,” (p. xii). In an article written in response to the events of 9/11, Weick (n.d.) wrote, “Things seem inexplicable. And to make it worse, many of our ways of making sense of the inexplicable seem to have collapsed.”

The common theme that these writers have struck upon is that we have entered into a period characterized by a frenetic pace of change and complexity (Allee, 1997; Branden, 1995; J. Brown & Duguid, 2000; Capra, 1982; Goerner, 1999; Havel, 1994; Scharmer, 2007). Many position these times as a new age altogether, arguing that we have moved from the Industrial Age to, variously, the Knowledge Age, the Integral Age, the Chaordic Age, the Conceptual Age and the Internet Age (Aburdene, 2005; Allee, 1997; Hock, 1999; Pink, 2005; Wilber, 2000). Frequently writers link these changes to corresponding developments in the sciences: just as quantum physics has shown that Newtonian thinking (dominated by a reductionist thought paradigm) is inadequate to wholly account for our reality, a more integral, holistic thought paradigm is now required

to understand the world of organizations (Capra, 1982; Goerner, 1999; Pascale, Millemann, & Gioja, 2000; Wheatley, 1999).

In this dissertation, I explore what I have come to believe is needed to respond to, and even thrive within, these complex times. Before I present my theory, I would like to provide the reader an understanding of how I came to these ideas over the course of my academic studies and through my personal and professional experience.

Background

My personal awakening to the importance of these ideas came in August 2001. I was attending the Assisi Conference, an annual exploration of self-organizing systems organized by Dr. Michael Conforti. My participation in the Assisi programs was the one indulgence I allowed my soul; otherwise I was gainfully employed at a global financial services company. At the time, my project at work was to establish offshore servicing capabilities for our US based customers. In this way, I was inadvertently contributing to the acceleration of complexity through globalization.

One of the guest speakers at Assisi was Sally Goerner, an integral scientist and professor. Goerner spoke about a world ready to collapse under the weight of its own complexity, a world where evidence of decay was mounting everywhere, a place where simmering tensions were ready to boil over. She cited the protests at the G8 Summit in Genoa, Italy, which occurred just a month earlier, and the protests in Seattle at the World Trade Organization conference in 1999. While I was peripherally aware of these events, I had no context to understand them at the time. I didn't really know what she was talking about, but her ominous message about a world on an unsustainable trajectory was riveting to me. I felt like I had been a member of the crowd witnessing the Emperor in his new clothes—naively nodding in agreement with the others about how splendid was the king's

attire while a little voice (Goerner's) in the background piped up and declared that the emperor was in fact naked. Intuitively what Goerner said felt right to me, but I had cut myself off from this kind of thinking. I was deeply entrenched in the corporate world, working for a financial services company in an effort to pay for my MBA, and simply not paying a lot of attention to the world at large.

I had not noticed the dissipating structures to which Goerner called attention. Instead I was working for a company that was firmly aligned with the Old School paradigm of positivism and competition that lionized numbers and measurement. I once heard an executive speak with almost pride when he cited the profitability of stored value products due to breakage (or, in other words, profit from people forgetting to cash their in what they had already paid for). Later the same executive cribbed a list of attributes from a book on customer loyalty and replaced the term "win-win" with simply "win." This made me feel squeamish—that a respected company leader would drop that second "win"—which for me changed the idea from being a pursuit of collaboration and mutual benefit to simple, selfish dominance. I certainly felt dissonance and disaffection with many things I saw in my workplace, but until Goerner's talk, I had not realized how details I was noticing were related to a global storyline of alienation. A month later, as the events of 9/11 unfolded, Goerner seemed to me a great prophet and my attention was rapt.

Since that time, like probably most other working adults, I have witnessed accelerating complexity play out in the workplace. As a leader at a financial services company, I have experienced deep change and marketplace disruption and have seen employees at all levels of the organization struggle to make sense of their rapidly morphing operating environment. My company experienced the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a direct assault on many of the company's pillars: several employees died in the World

Trade Center; the company's headquarters in lower Manhattan were closed for months while under repair; friends of mine visiting from another location ran out of the headquarters building without their wallets or laptops; our call centers were transformed into search operations, seeking to make contact with every New York based employee; and the blows to the finance and travel industries added an economic impact to the personal and physical trauma.

The off-shoring project, meanwhile, was a bright spot for the company, providing much needed cost relief and winning a prestigious company award. A guest speaker at the awards ceremony praised the project team's ability to deliver under duress. He drew a metaphor from the film *Black Hawk Down* (Scott, 2001), which told the story of rescuing soldiers ambushed in Mogadishu, Somalia: a wounded commander jumps into a vehicle and orders his underling to drive. The soldier protests, "But I'm shot, Colonel!" The Colonel responds, "Everybody's shot!"

I could relate very well: Our accomplishments had been achieved in a period of relative chaos. The soldier made sense of his own injury with the rationalization that the injury meant he could not act. His commander reframed the situation, pointing out that circumstances had changed for everyone—they had all crossed into a new world where new responses were required.

As manic as the period after 9/11 felt, I was surprised to feel greater dismay with the financial meltdown of 2008. By this time I was at another financial services company, and fairly new to that company. I was shocked to hear the admissions coming from Executive Row: "We've never seen anything like this." It felt clear for an uncomfortably long period of time that our leaders did not know what to do. The credit market was drying up, old stalwarts like Bear Stearns, Merrill Lynch and Lehman Brothers ran

aground and the housing market fell apart. And the credit card industry faced unprecedented regulatory change with the Card Act, which imposed restrictions on many of the industry's historical profit levers.

The macro disruptions that shook the foundations of my employers played out in more personal ways for employees. In a combined 15 years at the two companies, I saw six rounds of downsizings. In four cases, I was intimately involved in painful tasks like determining whose jobs would be eliminated and how the remaining work would be organized and allocated. Each time, I saw the sad reality of the same or some times greater work burden being distributed across fewer people, people who perhaps felt only marginally "lucky" to have been spared from job cuts. I have also witnessed the manic, desperate pursuit of a constantly shifting set of urgent priorities as leaders struggled to remain in good standing within the organization. In my estimation, such situations have often been accompanied by an increase in scapegoating, passive-aggressiveness and generalized anxiety. When individuals face unsettling circumstances such as these, familiar ways of making sense of events can become disturbed. The field of sensemaking provides a framework in which to understand situations where our ability to make sense becomes compromised.

Sensemaking. The disruptions that I have witnessed in the work place, across the globe, and within society are not unique to me. However, I have had the good fortune to be able to take a reflective stance toward what I was experiencing and witnessing. Inspired by the awakening that Goerner seeded in 2001, in 2005, I began to pursue my doctoral education in organizational systems. My academic pursuits provided me with exposure to ideas and frameworks that helped me to ground and structure my thinking and to begin to make sense of the apparent chaos in the world. In particular, I found the

concept of *sensemaking* to be most compelling as I sought to give meaning to my own experiences and observations. Sensemaking is an exploration of how people place new experiences into the context of what they already know in order to maintain activity and determine new directions to pursue. It is usually unconscious; enactive, in the sense that it produces action that shapes future reality; social; and tied to concepts of identity construction (Weick, 1995). Put succinctly, sensemaking can be thought of the stories we tell ourselves, the narratives that we impose upon our experience to give it meaning.

Complexity can put our ability to engage in sensemaking in jeopardy. When this occurs, we risk no longer being able to create an ongoing sense of meaning. The possibility of loss of coherence arises, destabilizing our ability to tie together the pieces that make up our reality, potentially paralyzing our ability to act. We can become frozen or in denial, mindlessly acting as if we are in the same old story when in fact the plot has changed and we have lost its thread.

I first discovered these dynamics of sensemaking when I read Karl Weick's (1993a) analysis of the tragic events that occurred at Mann Gulch. In August 1949, a forest fire broke out near Missoula, Montana. A crew of 16 *smoke jumpers* was dropped via parachute to contain the fire. Just a few hours later, all but three firefighters were dead. Weick's case study unflinchingly examined what had unfolded in Mann Gulch. Weick declared that a collapse of sensemaking had led to the deaths of thirteen young men who ignored the orders of their crew leader and ran away from an escape fire that he had improvised for their protection. Sensemaking provides a framework for exploring such events. It acts like radioactive dye, tracing the evolution of meaning through sense-defying circumstances like those that occurred at Mann Gulch, when one fire behaved in extraordinary, life-consuming ways, and another fire was deliberately lit to provide

salvation. And because sensemaking demands that people be able to find meaning in their actions, the Mann Gulch case outlines the tragic consequences that arise when the path to salvation is shrouded behind an inscrutable mystery that a rookie firefighter fails to grasp in the flash of the moment, during a time when hesitation can equal death.

When sensemaking collapses it can lead to tragic death. In its exalted state it can lead to grand heroism, as with Captain Chesley Sullenberger, who saved 155 lives by masterfully handling a potential aviation disaster. Sullenberger's challenge began when flocks of birds took out both of his passenger jet's engines. In aviation, the checklist is a critical technique for ensuring the maintenance of sense. But in this case, no checklist existed for double engine failure while flying in the New York City metro area. Instead, Sullenberger relied on 42 years of accumulated wisdom, which led him to reject landing options provided by air traffic control and opting to ditch the plane in the Hudson River (Couric, 2009). Sullenberger's decisions were famously successful and the pilot came to symbolize flawless mastery over a highly improbable event and a potentially catastrophic situation.

Weick (1995) reminds us that sensemaking is ongoing. It never starts and never stops. In its everydayness it can be inane. I recently heard an executive at my company, Martin, make a comment that belied his intuitive understanding of sensemaking. Using language that was uncharacteristically colorful for him, Martin said: "If they tell you it can't be done, that's jibbery-jab. It's a whole new world out there." The made up word, *jibbery-jab*, referred to how our old pre-programmed methods of operating had become obsolete, much like Sullenberger's checklists. "It's a whole new world" referred to the new set of business circumstance we were facing due to economic pressures caused by the financial crisis of 2008 and a stiffening legislative environment scrutinizing our

industry. Martin was saying that the story had changed and that our business partners need to fall in step with the new plot line. While Martin was able to tap into an awareness of sensemaking processes, in the course of my studies, I became particularly interested in the tendency for sensemaking to occur unconsciously. I considered what it might look like if sensemaking were to be brought to conscious awareness.

Sensecrafting: A new concept. My own concept of sensecrafting grew out of my questions about what deliberate sensemaking might look like. In Swanson (2009), I explored what characteristics comprised deliberate sensemaking. Having developed this idea, I then expanded it to a leadership practice: sensecrafting, which I define as facilitating a process of deliberate, collective sensemaking.

My concept of sensecrafting is informed by a few simple ideas:

- Though we are often unaware of it, our thoughts shape, even create, our reality (Bruner, 1986).
- A sense of meaning and purpose is vital to any human pursuit (Frankl, 1946/1985).
- Organizations are stronger when they have processes that give voice to and engage the hearts and minds of all their members (Blanchard, 2007; MacGregor, 2000).
- We are, by nature, storytellers. Story is the major unifying structure through which we tend to organize experience (Boje, 2001).

Weaving together these suppositions, I arrived at sensecrafting. The sensecrafting leader engages in processes that bring people together to forge meaning about their environment and how they should respond to it and to craft a narrative thread that unites the group in action toward realizing a common vision. To accomplish this, conscious awareness must be brought to bear on how we make sense of reality.

The four ideas outlined above map to specific topics that have been explored within the social sciences. Our thoughts create our reality connects to the concept of constructivism. The importance of meaning and purpose is explored extensively in the study of sensemaking. Participative leadership is concerned with the means through which organizations can involve their members in shaping direction and activity. Story in organizations is examined academically through Narrative Analysis.

In fact, I believe that organizational life is comprised of a polyphony of stories (Boje, 2001). I like to think of them as ‘the stories we tell ourselves’. The stories we tell ourselves are the reified form of our construction of reality, our made sense. Leaders tell themselves stories and they enroll others in those stories. The stories that leaders tell about the past and the present become prophetic in that they serve to usher in the future by organizing our action. Illuminating these stories is a way to apprehend the outcome of the leadership process.

What is called for. I believe that sensecrafting provides a useful way for leaders to respond to the challenges of accelerating complexity that is engendered in our current times. Sensecrafting is consistent with prescriptions provided by other thinkers: Goerner (1999) calls for new ways of seeing that perceive our interconnectedness; Kegan and Lahey (2009) cite the need for an ability to transform mindsets; Wheatley (1999) advocates for the capacity to facilitate process, foster relationships, and to nurture growth; Scharmer (2007) endorses the need for us to collectively become attuned to the inner places from which we ultimately interpret and respond to the world.

These researchers are calling for meaning-makers and story tellers—leaders who can take the threads of our perceptions, weave them together in new ways and usher in not only new actions but change the nature of our perception itself—promoting new ways

of seeing. “We need a new story,” Goerner (1999) asserts, and therefore, the ability to see “past the one which dominates now” (p. 89). The dominant story, according to Goerner (1999), is that which is grounded in a mechanistic, reductionist view of the universe. Below, I further explore what Goerner (1999), Kegan and Lahey (2009), Scharmer (2007), and Wheatley (1999) call for.

New ways of seeing to perceive our interconnectedness. “We must learn to see the world anew,” Wheatley (1999, p. 7) counsels. Because systems have become so interdependent, an action in one part of the system can easily have unintended consequences in the system or beyond in regions that are believed to be outside of the system, but are connected nonetheless. We need people who can perceive these interconnections and therefore can better anticipate the ability of effects to ripple throughout the network. To cultivate new ways of seeing we need to become aware of what we are blind to, but we also need to understand how our own brains can distort what we see. Looking through the filters of our mental models, we can fail to see what does not fit our expectations, or conversely, overvalue that which does fit.

The ability to transform mindsets. Becoming aware of how our thinking shapes our mindsets is not enough. We must possess an openness to bring conscious attention to our own way of thinking and have the courage to change these mindsets. Our current mindset is both the product of the mind itself and of the way the mind has been molded into a rigid pattern based on our convictions, beliefs and assumptions. These underlying patterns subsequently limit our actions and reactions. Extraordinary courage and the ability to transcend our own way of thinking will be required to truly transform mindsets. A poignant quote has been attributed to Einstein, “You can’t solve a problem from the

same consciousness that created it.” In order to apprehend the problems in today’s highly complex world we need to find a new perspective from which to observe the situation.

Being collectively attuned to interior conditions. With this concept, Scharmer (2007) introduces a few critical ideas: the role of intention and perception and field effects. The role of intention is important because what is inside the observer will shape what is observed; what is inside the doer will shape what is done. Bill O’Brien, Scharmer’s mentor, influenced Scharmer in conceiving this idea. O’Brien told him, “the success of an intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervener” (cited in Scharmer, 2007, p. 7). Scharmer related this perspective to his experience growing up on a farm. For the farmer, “fields are the grounding condition, the living soil, from which grows that which only later becomes visible to the eye. . . . Every good farmer focuses attention on sustaining and enhancing the quality of the soil” (pp. 8-9).

Scharmer (2007) intends more than metaphor when he brings in the image of the field. He believes that social fields impart an influence similar to that of a field of land. Just as the land provides the environment from which crops emerge, social fields are the ground from which reality emerges. Scharmer drew on Lewin’s (1951) concept of field, which Lewin defined as: “the totality of coexisting facts, which are conceived of as mutually interdependent” (p. 240). Building off Lewin’s (1951) work, Scharmer (2007) developed his idea of the *field structure of attention* which he describes as “the realm between the visible world (what we see) as it meets the invisible world (the source or place from which we perceive it). When we change the way we attend, a different world is going to come forth” (pp. 113-114). Scharmer’s prescription for the complexity of our current times, then, is to “collectively becom[e] aware of our inner places from which we operate in real time” (p. 10).

Scharmer (2007) defined four listening practices, the awareness of which can help us to shift the structure of our attention: *downloading*, or “listening by reconfirming habitual judgments” (p. 11); *object-focused or factual listening*; *empathetic listening*; and *generative listening*. Empathetic listening requires an open heart, which gives access to “the empathic capacity to connect directly with another person or living system. If that happens, we feel a profound switch; we forget about our own agenda and begin to see how the world unfolds through someone else’s eyes” (p. 12). This process is something akin to a fusion of horizons, when the perspectives of two or more people come together to provide access to a more expanded mode of perception.

New ways of seeing, including peering into our internal meaning-making systems and transforming mindsets are a part of deliberate sensemaking. When we slow down the process of automatic, unconscious sensemaking and shine the light of our awareness on our own meaning making activity, we open to the possibility of seeing anew and altering the bedrock from which our thoughts emanate. When this occurs, seismic shifts in the way we experience and interact with reality become possible.

The capacity to facilitate process, foster relationships, and to nurture growth.

As described by Wheatley (1999), these capacities relate to engaging in sensecrafting as a collective process. For Wheatley, these processes are critical because of our inherent interdependence. As the world has become increasingly interconnected and complex, the importance of collective processes and fostering relationships has grown. Wheatley called for a style of leadership in which leaders respect and support individuals’ needs to engage in meaning making. She stated, “When leaders honor us with opportunities to know the truth of what is occurring and support us to explore the deeper meaning of events, we instinctively reach out to them” (p. 133).

Research Questions

This dissertation attempts to answer: how can individuals develop their capacity for sensecrafting in order to cultivate a more generative relationship with the organizations to which they belong?

Secondary questions include:

1. What stories are individuals telling themselves about their organization and their role within it?
2. How do leaders relate to the other stories present within their organizations?
3. What stories do leaders craft in order to influence others in their organization?
4. How can leaders further develop the skill of sensecrafting?

I wanted to explore the presence of stories within organizations by working with individuals who collected the stories present in their organizations. They identified what stories are present, which are dominant and which are subversive or oppressed. They identified their own stories and the collective stories that they support and subscribe to as well as those stories that run in conflict to their own. Participants brought awareness to whether they contribute to the prevailing stories of their organization, or to the undertow of counter-stories. Once these phenomena were unveiled, I explored how conscious, planned effort can influence the stories themselves and how the individuals stand in regard to these stories. I asked myself questions, such as: If an individual finds herself to be a part of the organization's counter-culture, can she craft a story that allows her to influence the mainstream of that organization? Or would she be more successful by simply attempting to recast her own relationship to the countervailing story?

In this dissertation, I explore the kind of leadership needed in organizations to support people and the organization in its ability to thrive in the complexity of our current times. Story is central to sensemaking and sensecrafting; it is an encapsulation of our

sensemaking activity. Story packages the results of our previous sensemaking in a way that is easily transmittable to others. To ground this exploration, I covered three significant areas:

- First I looked at meaning as it is understood through constructivism, sensemaking and story.
- Next I examined how participative leadership can allow leaders to engage others in the process of sensecrafting.
- Finally I explored disciplines for deliberately inquiring into the forces at play: hermeneutics and action science.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in this dissertation is to further develop the concept of sensecrafting. I explored: In what ways do leaders naturally exhibit traits of sensecrafting? Does the concept resonate for leaders? How can they further develop this skill?

The aims of my research were twofold: First of all, for the participants involved, the immediate purpose was to create insight and actions that lead them to create a more generative work environment. Second, the efforts toward the first aim created learning about techniques that can be used by others to replicate positive results encountered in the research process. I believe that insights generated through the study will benefit both the research participants and the broader community through making a contribution to the literature. My objective, then, was “to develop genuinely well-informed action” (Torbert, 1981, p. 145). This would assist in creating a “change in the lived experience of those involved in the inquiry” (Reason, 1994, p. 24).

Since I believe that sensecrafting is intimately related to storytelling, I employed the stories that people tell themselves as the primary unit of study in this investigation.

Toward this end, my research explored:

- Leaders' awareness of their own engagement in a storytelling process.
- Techniques for raising this awareness to a level where leaders are able to consciously write the story. For example, an individual might recognize that the plot line is not supportive of her ultimate goals and make efforts to edit that plot line.
- The collective nature of stories in organizations. As individuals, we tell ourselves our own stories, but we also engage in a collective storytelling that occurs whenever humans interact and, especially, whenever we come together in an organized way to accomplish some common goal. Organizations, then, could be thought of as collections of stories, perhaps even competing stories (Boje, 1995). In this chaotic soup, some stories become predominant and gain energy and power as they are endorsed and supported by more members of the organization. Other stories are suppressed and exist primarily in the shadows, possessed mainly by those organizational members who are disempowered. Such minority storylines can be witnessed in the experiences of whistleblowers, like Sherron Watkins at Enron or Jeffrey Wigand at tobacco firm Brown & Williamson. Through a lonely and risky process, these individuals came to formulate the complicity of their own organization in serious malfeasance. Other cases are less dramatic, like an executive who is forced out of an organization due to a disagreement about strategy. Organizations who suppress minority voices may do so at their own peril: dissenting voices, such as the executives just mentioned, might be in touch with aspects of the organization's shadow that, if ignored, can lead to trouble for the company.

Through the exploration of leaders' understanding of, and use of, story in organizations, I aim to develop a deeper appreciation of sensecrafting.

Research Method

For a theory to have practical application, it is important to be proven in the real world. In Swanson (2010), I performed a pilot study to look for evidence of sensecrafting within the leadership techniques of three middle managers. This study found that the participants did employ some of the techniques of sensecrafting. To further the exploration of sensecrafting and to better understand its relevance to leaders, in this study, I proposed to conduct a research study using an approach that drew upon hermeneutic participatory research (HPR) and action science. The study has been

designed to explore to what extent the participants already use sensecrafting, how useful they find the concept, to what extent they can learn to improve their effectiveness with sensecrafting, and with what effects. The effects of participant's sensecrafting efforts are explored by examining their own reactions.

While I find much support for the concept of sensecrafting, thus far the idea has been derived from theoretical considerations of the literature on sensemaking and my own personal experiences and observations. Therefore, I conducted research to further investigate the ways in which leaders can work with the notion of sensecrafting. Since sensecrafting is intimately concerned with interpretation and collaboration, appropriate methodologies for this research are action science and HPR. Originated by Herda (1999), HPR is a method that allows individuals to participate together in developing common understandings of phenomena through conversation. Action science is a research method that can both complement HPR and provide sensecrafting leaders who participate in the study, a paradigm for approaching their own work that can extend beyond the research project.

The study employs two research methodologies: HPR and action science, a type of action research developed by Argyris and Schön (1978). HPR, with its roots in hermeneutics, is concerned with the creation of meaning.

“[Action science] focuses on the problem of creating conditions for collaborative inquiry in which people in organizations function as co-researchers rather than merely as subjects,” (Argryis & Schön, 1996, p. 50). Isaacs (1999) further elaborated that action science is “a way of understanding why what we do is not always what we intend, or even what we are aware of, and of learning how to close these gaps” (p. 185). Given action science's assumption of a gap between intention and action, it seems an

appropriate approach to explore sensecrafting which itself is concerned with bringing assumptions and actions to conscious awareness so that enactment can occur in a more deliberate fashion. My intention with this study was to integrate HPR and action science as part of an inquiry into organizational stories as they are captured and understood by individuals who participated in the study. The study is comprised of engaging participants in conversations following protocols established in HPR by Herda (1999). In these dialogues, I engaged participants in acts of sensecrafting for the purposes of bringing their sensemaking to consciousness and so that we could formulate plans for participants to engage in the facilitation of collective sensemaking. I designed a framework for conversations with participants and held the space for participants to explore sensecrafting through a series of conversations spread out over time. This allowed participants to enact the plans that we create in the context of one conversation and for us to together explore the results in subsequent conversations. For example, a participant might undertake a plan to challenge a prevailing story in their organization in order to craft a new one. In carrying out this work, I tested the validity of my own assumptions with regard to sensecrafting, while engaging participants in the creation of knowledge (their own) as they challenged assumptions and carried out actions that can lead to new approaches and insights.

Significance of the Study

This study offers two key benefits. To the research literature, the study contributes an empirical test of a theoretical concept that adds value to understanding how to cope with leadership challenges of the 21st century. It is a unique instance of studying sensemaking through a hermeneutic lens; searches of Business Source Elite, ABI/Inform Global, Academic Search Premier, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses found no

scholarly articles that shared the keywords *hermeneutics* and *sensemaking*. For the participants, the study will likely represent a new approach to considering leadership (action science and HPR), introducing the concept of sensecrafting, and providing participants with a repertoire of techniques; all contribute to the leaders' abilities to engage in reflection and more conscious approaches to leadership.

Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity, I will outline several of the critical terms used in this dissertation. First I will provide definitions for terms that lay a foundation for the concepts under exploration. This section concludes with terms that refer to techniques that will comprise my researcher's repertoire.

Sensemaking. Sensemaking refers to both a field of organizational inquiry and to a process that individuals regularly undertake. In organizational inquiry, sensemaking examines how people come to find meaning in their world. It is most evident when individuals encounter stimuli that challenge their current way of seeing the world and need to incorporate these new stimuli into their system for making sense of the world. In the literature, this most frequently shows up when individuals are confronted with disorienting situations, such as disasters.

Sensegiving. Sensegiving is a corollary to sensemaking. This refers to situations wherein one individual or group makes sense of events and provides that sense of events to others. In the literature, sensegiving is typically conceived as a function of leadership, where for example, management interprets events and passes that interpretation along to subordinates.

Deliberate sensemaking. Deliberate, or conscious, sensemaking is a variant of sensemaking that I proposed in Swanson (2009). This idea builds off the typical

characteristics of sensemaking articulated by Weick (1995): that sensemaking is unconscious and ongoing. In considering the idea of deliberate sensemaking, I pose the challenge of what if we made our sensemaking deliberate (i.e., brought the process to consciousness)? I found in Swanson (2009) that deliberate sensemaking is characterized by eight attributes that will be elaborated on in chapter 2: learning intention, tolerance for ambiguity, discernment, openness, attention to framing, mindfulness, action and reflection. Since then, I have come to question whether a ninth attribute may be necessary: envisioning.

Sensecrafting. Sensecrafting is a further variant of sensemaking. I define sensecrafting as facilitating conscious, collective sensemaking. Sensecrafting is a leadership practice where the leader helps the group slow down the process of sensemaking, making it visible and bringing it to conscious awareness. When this occurs, the group can benefit from an examination of how their own underlying assumptions, beliefs and values shapes their perceptions. Sensecrafting opens people to greater possibility, allowing them to question assumptions and move past habits. To better understand how sensecrafting is distinct from sensemaking, Table 1 presents a comparison of Weick's (1995) seven properties of sensemaking compared to properties of sensecrafting as I defined them.

Mental models. Mental models are a cognitive framework that we construct in order to make sense of the world. Mental models represent our impression of the way things work. They are comprised of our assumptions, beliefs and values and come into existence through our experience.

Table 1

Seven Properties of Sensemaking and Sensecrafting

Properties of Sensemaking	Properties of Sensecrafting
Social: produces shared meaning	Sensecrafting is conceived as a collective process, so it is inherently social. While Weick's characterization of social has an unintentional quality (by which I mean that sensemaking just tends to be social), in sensecrafting, there is more concern with deliberately involving the collective in shaping the sense that is created.
Grounded in identity construction	No special emphasis on <i>Identity</i> in sensecrafting.
Retrospective: occurs as a reflection on the past	Sensecrafting is still retrospective in that the past is a key object of the sensemaking effort, however in sensecrafting there is also a deliberate focus on the present and future and more effort to employ future perfect thinking (Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002). Answering the questions: "What do I want to create?"; "What am I creating?"
Triggered by cues	Sensecrafting needs no cue; it is independent of any trigger. It represents a deliberate, intentional and purposeful effort to be constantly vigilant of the process of making sense. In particular, attention is focused on how biases, assumptions, and filters might shape the sensemaking process.
Ongoing: never stops and never starts	The presence of the properties of <i>cues</i> and <i>ongoing</i> in Weick's concept presents a bit of a dichotomy. If "Sensemaking never stops and never starts," then what distinction is being added when we say that sensemaking is "triggered by cues"? My interpretation is that while sensemaking always occurs, the presence of cues triggers sensemaking of a different nature, a more deliberate nature, something more akin to the sensecrafting that I am articulating.
Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy	Sensecrafting places an emphasis on being generative, on creating the conditions for thriving. The implicit question is "How can we do it better?"
Enactive of sensible environments	There is no special emphasis on <i>enactment</i> in sensecrafting. Rather, sensecrafting is enactive of sensible environments

Note. Column 1 is based on material from *Sensemaking in Organizations*, by K. E. Weick, 1995, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Enactment. Enactment is used here in the sense that Weick (1995) employed it as one of the seven properties of sensemaking. He explained that uses the term *enactment* to underscore the idea that in the course of one's time in an organization, people play a role in creating the environment they encounter. Enactment couples action with understanding: by acting upon our understanding, we create the reality that confronts us.

The stories we tell ourselves. The stories we tell ourselves relates to our identity construction (whether as individuals or groups). These stories are constellations of meanings that we attribute to events. The meanings are shaped into narrative forms and these narratives are slowly adapted to incorporate new information while at the same time maintaining a thread through personal history. The stories we tell ourselves can be thought of as our explanations for why we do what we do, why we experience what we experience and how these factors relate to who we are.

Role. In this dissertation, *role* takes on a broad meaning. It refers both to formal and informal roles that individuals hold within organizations. Formal roles are typically denoted by the individual's title. Informal roles are more dynamic and situational, for example an employee who holds a low level within the organizational hierarchy may perform as a leader in some contexts. *Role*, as it is used most often in this paper, can be thought of as akin to the term *character* in narrative. In this context, role refers to the individual's place within a plot line: is he a prime driver of the action or a pawn in a larger scheme? From the perspective of the dominant story is the individual a protagonist or an antagonist?

Organizations as competing stories. Since organizations are comprised of multiple individuals, many different stories about the organization, its purpose and why it does what it does, are likely to be present. Narrative Analysis explores the layers of these

multiple stories. While particular stories dominate within organizations, alternative views exist and these minority stories may occasionally gain momentum and come to challenge the dominant storyline. This idea is intimately related to the stories we tell ourselves. Every individual in an organization is telling herself stories about her own identity, about the organization, and about how she fits into the organization. The organization must serve as a container for all of these stories and the organization's identity will be defined by how individual members collectively reconcile potentially competing stories.

Generative/thriving. I use the terms *generative* and *thriving* to denote a positive environment that is characterized by advancement and progressive movement. My intent with these terms is to describe something that is positive in a sustainable manner. For example, sometimes in the short term a person might experience trials and tribulations as negative events. If these situations impart learning and overall maturation to the individual, then the events can be viewed as generative. Similarly, a *generative relationship* occurs when an individual positions herself in regard to another (an individual or groups of people) in a manner that promotes progressive and sustainable movement.

Fields. In the broadest sense, a field can be thought of as a matrix of related effects. Wheatley (1999) describes fields as “invisible forces that occupy space and influence behavior” (p. 15). Many types of fields in science are well known: gravitational and electromagnetic fields, for example. However, fields that influence human behavior have also been proposed. Lewin (1951), who developed the concept of field theory in his work in psychology, defined field as: “the totality of coexisting facts, which are conceived of as mutually interdependent” (p. 240). Scharmer (2007) characterized social

fields as “the *grounding condition*, the living soil, from which grows that which only later becomes visible to the eye” (pp. 8-9).

Conforti (1999), merging notions of scientific fields with Jungian psychology describes the working of *archetypal fields*:

The archetype, which functions as an informational, rational, and meaning carrying structure, works its influence by creating a field of influence and whose effect is not limited by space and time parameters. Similar to the effect of fields in the outer world--such as gravitational or electromagnetic or in the casting of a spell--the archetype often consumes individual consciousness and works to incarnate through the types of situations, obsessions, interests, concerns, and moods we experience. The presence and existence of the archetype is felt through its effects. (p. 22)

Frames. Boje (2001) used *frame* to refer to a way of organizing reality, stating that different texts, or interpretations of reality, employ different frames. As in the boundary-breaking play, Tamara, “each story is an intertextual framing of reality being chased by wandering and fragmenting groups of spectators” (p. 42). Similarly, Czarniawska (2004) equated story and frame: “A story is a frame—a frame that emerges and is tried out, a frame that is developed and elaborated, or a frame that can easily absorb the new event” (Chapter 3, Section 3, para. 2).

An important element of sensemaking is selection, or the way that we frame experience. Weick (1995) articulated, “To understand sensemaking is to be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments” (p. 43). Drath and Palus (1994) built on this idea:

Meaning-making makes sense of an action by placing it within some larger frame, and this frame is seen by the person who makes sense as the way the world is and thus guides the person in his or her way of being in the world (Bruner, 1986; Goodman, 1978). (p. 3)

Developing sensitivity to the way we frame reality is critical to cultivating skills of deliberate sensemaking:

[Frames] name the problem at hand, determine what solutions make sense, and shape the actions to be taken. They lend internal rationality to our theories of action and a sense of order and certainty to the world around us. Although we impose frames on our perceived reality, we usually act as if our perceptions were objective reality itself. (Friedman & Rogers, 2008, p. 254)

For this reason, action science targets framing as a point of leverage: when we attune to how we are framing a situation, our fundamental understanding of it becomes subject to change. Schön (1983) referred to such deliberate efforts to shift frames as *frame experiments*:

When [a practitioner of reflection-in-action] finds himself stuck in a problematic situation which he cannot readily convert to a manageable problem, he may construct a new way of setting the problem—a new frame which, in what I shall call a ‘frame experiment,’ he tries to impose on the situation. (p. 63)

Researcher’s repertoire. This section describes seven techniques and their associated terms that comprise my researcher’s repertoire.

Storycatching. Baldwin (2005) coined the term Storycatcher, one who works deliberately with story to help people make sense of their experience. Baldwin provided the reader with a guide for how he can become a Storycatcher:

The Storycatcher’s job is to help us shift into narrative: to make people conscious of the story just beneath the surface of our talk and invite us to speak it. . . . Storycatchers are intrigued with making—perhaps driven to make—sense of experience and to make stories out of our sense. Sometimes Storycatchers are provocative, disturbing the status quo with a probing question or statement. Often Storycatchers are a gift, the people others count on to make a story that will get us through the chaos. (p. 30)

Baldwin (2005) offered an example of how Storycatching can play out in organizations through the work of Toke Paludan Moeller, who described himself as “a student of space, a codesigner of energy fields, and a practitioner of what happens when we join each other there” (p. 168). Baldwin (2005) further articulated how Moeller’s and her approach manifests in organizations:

When we apply storycatching skills to the conversations going on around us in organizations and listen to these stories consciously, we can tell whether the purpose is being reinforced, shifted, changed, sustained, ignored, or undermined. When the purpose story is tended, people's day-to-day stories reinforce how successfully the organization is fulfilling its purpose under current conditions. If the purpose story is lost, misrepresented, or hoarded by leadership, the day-to-day stories speak of frustration, abandonment, and fragmentation. (p. 171)

In this excerpt, Baldwin offered some insight into what might be the various drivers lying beneath the polyphony of stories that emerge within organizations and provides an opening for how a conscious manager might work to unite these disparate voices.

Frame experimentation. Frame experimentation “refers to a way of bringing a different perspective to the fore and trying it out on a situation to see what we might learn” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 151). The term was originally coined by Schön (1983), who used it to describe the process by which an individual “construct[s] a new way of setting the problem” (p. 63) when confronted with a problematic situation that is not easily manageable. Frame experimentation represents a reflective form of thinking in which the individual considers the underlying mental models at play in her understanding of the situation. As such, this approach to deliberately working with frames has strong application in my research. Friedman and Rogers (2008) articulated how frame experimentation can be deployed as part of action science:

From an action science perspective, our actions are not only attempts to achieve goals, but also a tacit form of experimentation in which we test our theories of action (Schön, Drake, & Miller, 1984). Indeed, one of the implications of framing is that we should regard what we ‘know’ as hypotheses about reality rather than as facts—no matter how certain we may feel. Action science inquiry makes this experimentation process explicit and open to conscious reflection for the purpose of learning. (p. 254-255).

Frame experimentation, or the testing of hypotheses that relate to one's underlying model of circumstances, has two components: an awareness of the frames,

and the mental dexterity to restructure the frames. Schön (1983) explicated the workings of frame experimentation. Speaking of a hypothetical inquirer, Schön stated, “his hypothesis is about the situation’s potential for transformation. . . . He can discover that he has not achieved satisfactory change or that he ought to undertake change of a different order” (p. 166).

Reflection. Mezirow (1991) mined territory similar to frame experimentation with his notion of critical reflection. As with frame experimentation, critical reflection depends on the inquirer’s ability to become aware of her own underlying assumptions.

Mezirow explained:

Critical reflection addresses the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place. . . . To question the validity of a long-taken-for-granted meaning perspective predicated on a presupposition about oneself can involve the negation of values that have been very close to the center of one’s self-concept. (p. 12)

There is great risk engendered in critical reflection and doing so requires courage.

Suspension. Much like frame experimentation, Isaacs (1999) advocates for suspension: “Suspension means that we neither suppress what we think nor advocate it with unilateral conviction. Rather, we display our thinking in a way that lets us and others see and understand it” (p. 134-135). Suspension involves developing an awareness of our assumptions, and rather than identifying with those assumptions, or seeing through them in a way that makes their effects transparent to us, we hold our assumptions out in front of us. An analogy would be an individual who wears glasses and who takes off his glasses and holds them out a foot or so in front of his face. From this distance, he can choose whether or not to peer through the glasses and can perceive that the glasses have a distorting effect on how he sees the world.

Ladder of inference. Another technique for surfacing tacit material is the ladder of inference, developed by Argyris (1990). The ladder of inference is an analogy to help individuals understand the meanings, assumptions and beliefs that they hold below the level of their awareness. Several rungs of increasing abstraction characterize the ladder. This model can help us understand how we move from taking in what might seem to be objective information, to taking action based on our unchallenged beliefs and assumptions.

At the first rung of the ladder is the observable data and experiences that we perceive. At the next rung, we select information from our observations. Next, we add meanings to that information based on our personal experiences and the cultural context. As we move up the ladder, we make assumptions based on the meanings that we have added. Next we draw conclusions, followed by adopting beliefs about the world based on inferences. Finally, we take actions based on our beliefs. A reflexive loop links our beliefs to the information that we will select in the future (Ross, 2004).

The ladder of inference is a useful technique for slowing down and dissecting our thought process. It can help us to become aware of how the content at each rung generates the thoughts that emerge at each successive rung. Our inferences become increasingly abstract and potentially divorced from what actually took place.

Left hand column. Another technique for facilitating reflection is the Left-Hand Column, first developed by Argyris and Schön (1974) as the Two-Column Research Method. This exercise asks an individual to consider a conversation, which is recorded on the right hand side of the page, and what he was thinking during that conversation, captured on the left-hand side. The individual is then asked to reflect on why what is

written in the left hand column remained unspoken. The exercise helps the individual explore his tacit assumptions.

Journal writing. A final technique that may be helpful to participants in the research process is journal writing. Baldwin (2005) described:

Writing organizes the mind and the actions that lead from the mind. Over time, the decisions and choices we make in the rush of the moment are informed by the self-knowledge our story gives us. We learn that if we have practiced articulating our story, if we have honored the path to this moment by writing it down, the choices we make are congruent with who we say we are. . . . For in writing we live life twice: once in the experience, and again in recording and reflecting upon our experience. (p. 43)

Using journaling allowed participants to capture their thoughts and experiences between our sessions. In the journals, participants captured the results of activities that we planned using the various techniques previously described. Journal writing can play a dual role as a research artifact.

Summary

In this chapter, I have posited that organizational leaders in our present times are confronted with an unprecedented level of complexity, a complexity that they may not be prepared to deal with adequately. I have suggested that what is called for are leaders who can engage in a skill that I call sensecrafting, or facilitating a process of collective, conscious sensemaking. To provide some context for my theory, I have provided the reader with the personal experiences that led me to this study.

I have introduced my intentions for embarking upon research into the nature of sensecrafting, to see how leaders manifest these qualities and to explore ways in which leaders might increase their effectiveness in engaging in sensecrafting. I provided a high level overview of my research method, which combines elements of action science as

articulated by Argyris and Schön (1991) and HPR as articulated by Herda (1999). I will further explicate the research design and theoretical underpinnings in chapter 3.

In the following chapter, I present a thorough literature review in order to ground my proposed study. The literature review will first explore in detail my own conception of sensecrafting and its roots and will then delve more deeply into foundational concepts such as constructivism, sensemaking, and storytelling.

Chapter 2: Sensecrafting and the Literature

This chapter outlines my concept of sensecrafting in greater detail and provides a strong background for the concepts that support sensecrafting. This task is critical because sensecrafting is a term that I have conceived (meaning to engage in collective and deliberate sensemaking). This dissertation tests and refines the concept; therefore, it is vital that the reader possesses a detailed understanding of not only sensecrafting, but also its supporting elements. This chapter will include a review of constructivism, sensemaking, sensemaking and leadership, narrative, and storytelling.

Overview of Sensecrafting

Sensemaking is a topic of inquiry critical to our discussion of sensecrafting. Sensemaking is a fairly intuitive term, referring to how people make sense of the world around them. Karl Weick, (2005) perhaps the most prominent scholar of sensemaking, defined seven properties of sensemaking: it is social in nature, grounded in identity construction, retrospective, triggered by cues, ongoing, more concerned with plausibility than accuracy and enactive (meaning that as we make sense, we create our environment). With sensecrafting, I am attempting to stake out ground within sensemaking that specifies a more intentional variety of leadership aimed at co-creation. It is critical here to consider language. For example, in discussions of sensemaking and leadership, writers often refer to *recipients* of sensemaking or to *sensegiving*. Both of these terms suggest a level of passivity amongst the collective that I wish to challenge. Sensecrafting is intended to be patently co-creative and the role of leadership is focused more on creating the conditions for sense to emerge rather than being the lead sensemaker or *giving* sense to *recipients*.

The distinction that I am attempting to draw between activities like an individual act of sensemaking or sensegiving and sensecrafting is somewhat akin to Bohm's (1996/2004) distinction between the outcomes of discussion and dialogue. According to Bohm, the difference between the two activities, among other things, is that in dialogue, participants truly suspend their opinions and assumptions. Kaipa and Radjou (2013) describe this kind of communication as operating without filters: "Leaders who operate without any filters live as if life were a kaleidoscope: they are open to let their perspectives, conditioned by beliefs and experiences, be re-formed not just once but again and again" (Chapter 2, Section 11, para. 1). Kaipa and Radjou explained the nature of these filters:

We all wear them [filters]. . . . These filters do color our perspective and shape our motivation, decisions, and actions. To actually see the world as it is, not as we are used to seeing it, we first need to become aware of and then set aside our perceptual filters. (Chapter 1, Section 3, para. 2-3)

Bohm (1996/2004) explained that when we are able to do this, we may enter into participative dialogue:

If people are to cooperate (i.e., literally to "work together") they have to be able to create something in common, something that takes shape in their mutual discussions and actions, rather than something that is conveyed from one person who acts as an authority to the others, who act as passive instruments of this authority. (p. 3)

Many organizational theorists have emphasized the importance of people working together collaboratively. The result is a co-creation, something that arises from collective efforts—something that could not have been created by the individuals alone. In a book subtitled *The Art of Thinking Together*, Isaacs (1999) describes his notion of effective dialogue:

In dialogues that seem to flow powerfully, people begin to realize that they are speaking to the common pool of meaning being *created by all the people together*

and not to each other as individuals. *They are seeking to gather a new quality of meaning and understanding together.* In a dialogue, people are not just interacting, *but creating together* [italics added]. (p. 174)

Bohm (1996/2004) and Isaacs (1999) are describing sensecrafting in action: people together creating meaning. The sensecrafting leader does not seek to impose meaning, but rather facilitates a process by which people can engage in collective meaning creation. Drath and Palus (1994) advocate for “meaning-making communities of practice” (p. 23). Balogun and Johnson (2005) cite a number of theorists (e.g., Brown, 1998; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) who hold the perspective that individuals co-create their work environments.

In *The Stories We Live By*, psychologist Dan McAdams (1993) describes the process by which our personal narratives coalesce to create our consensual reality:

The stories we create influence the stories of other people, those stories give rise to still others, and soon we find meaning and connection within a web of story making and story living. Through our personal myths, we help to create the world we live in, at the same time that it is creating us. (p. 37)

Wheatley (1999) describes a similar process of co-creation:

The new science keeps reminding us that in this participative universe, nothing living lives alone. . . . We are constantly called to be in relationship. . . *Even reality is created through our participation in relationships.* We choose what to notice; we relate to certain things and ignore others. *Through these chosen relationships, we co-create our world* [italics added]. (p. 145)

Two themes clearly emerge from these examples: (a) that people in groups tend to create together, motivated by a quest for meaning, and (b) that the conditions under which this occurs are not accidental and that generative conditions can be nurtured by the leader. Sensecrafting, as I am articulating it, is concerned with just that: expressing leadership by taking responsibility for creating the conditions in which conscious, collective sensemaking can occur. What would the sensecrafting leader believe?

- She would reject that it is the exclusive domain of leader to ‘give sense.’
- She would believe that no matter what she (or the organization does) that people will make sense for themselves. Therefore, in order to promote productive, collective action, she will encourage people to engage in conscious, collective sensemaking.
- She would honor the perspectives of others—she would be skilled in helping people articulate their perspectives and in helping them understand where these perspectives come from.
- She would understand that power has self-perpetuating tendencies—people want to please their leader, and tend to feed the leader information that will make her feel good and will reinforce her beliefs. Therefore, she must be vigilant—she must be open and seek out that which disconfirms.
- Sense is created, not discovered. This implies agency. If a sense already exists to be discovered, someone created it. Other senses are always possible. This perspective advocates for everyone’s right to participate in a collectively generated made-sense.

So, then, one might ask, in what sense is the sensecrafter a *leader*? She is one who holds the container, who creates the space, and the conditions for people to give voice to their perspectives, safety for people to challenge their own thinking, access to sensemaking resources. With sensecrafting, I am calling for a leadership not so much concerned with asserting a particular point of view and asking everyone to rally around it, but rather a leadership that has faith that what emerges from the collective is more resilient, more adaptive, than what any one individual can imagine or create alone. I envision these traits as a way of being for the sensecrafting leader. They are necessary conditions which must exist if the leader is to possess, and express, the nine traits of a sensecrafting leader are outlined in the section entitled “Sensemaking” later in this chapter. The sensecrafting leader creates the necessary conditions by being aware of, and teaching people about, the importance of context and framing; recognizing his or her own role as author, and the group’s potential to be authors; calling upon the group to be

authors; honoring the importance of meaning and purpose; knowing his or her audience; and weaving all of these elements together into a cohesive story to which people can relate.

Leadership as sensecrafting is about posing questions, and it is also about provoking questions. The leader creates the conditions where the group begins to connect things in a novel way, and this capacity to see differently opens the possibility for new questions.

In the Industrial Age, with its simplistic causal equations, we could afford a leadership that concerned itself with having *the* answer. But in today's complex, interconnected world, we cannot even be confident that we are *asking* the right questions. We need new ways of thinking, and seeing, and we have to find ways to increase the robustness of perceiving and interpreting. By facilitating a process of conscious, collective sensemaking, sensecrafting delivers what is needed.

An Example of Sensecrafting

President Barack Obama exhibited some of the qualities of sensecrafting as he went through the process of authorizing the mission that resulted in the death of avowed terrorist Osama bin Laden in May 2011. Obama revealed his decision process to Steve Kroft (2011) on a special edition of *60 Minutes*, which aired May 4, 2011 on CBS. Obama described to Kroft how he had learned from intelligence sources in August 2010 that bin Laden was thought to be living in a compound in Pakistan. Over the next several months the CIA and the military began planning possible actions and trying to establish certainty regarding bin Laden's presence at the site. Even so, Obama explained that his decision was made difficult because "the evidence that we had was not absolutely conclusive" (para. 7).

Obama demonstrated the ability to thoroughly think through many elements of the mission, including its aftermath. In so doing, he showed an appreciation of unintended consequences and new ways of seeing to perceive our interconnectedness. He did this by developing comprehensive contingency plans, plans that were tested in action, as when one of the helicopters had a hard landing and had to be destroyed. The forethought given to the handling of bin Laden's corpse is also instructive. As Obama describes it:

It was a joint decision [to bury bin Laden at sea]. We thought it was important to think through ahead of time how we would dispose of the body if he were killed in the compound. . . .what we tried to do was, consulting with experts in Islamic law and ritual, to find something that was appropriate that was respectful of the body. (Kroft, 2011, para. 112)

The decision not to release photos of bin Laden was also given thorough consideration and unintended consequences again were considered. Obama weighed the benefits of providing the world immediate, convincing evidence of bin Laden's death against the possibility of photos being used by bin Laden's supporters to rally support for him as a martyr. Finally, the decision to launch a commando attack, despite risks to U.S. soldiers, was carefully considered. Obama explained, "I thought it was important, though, for us to be able to say that we'd definitely got the guy" (Kroft, 2011, para. 25).

The successful bin Laden assassination also demonstrates Obama's ability to transform mindsets within the military and intelligence community. In particular, he seems to have inspired a new sense of cooperation between these agencies. According to Obama, "At that point you probably had unprecedented cooperation between the CIA and our military in starting to shape an action plan that ultimately resulted in success this week." Obama was able to inspire a new sense of focus on the bin Laden mission, leading to the CIA identifying bin Laden's whereabouts in August, 2010, at a location he was

believed to have been in since 2006. Obama's ability to get agencies working together is also reflective of the sensecrafting trait of facilitating process and fostering relationships.

In the *60 Minutes* interview, Kroft called attention to Obama's handling of dissent amongst the planning team. Obama's response reveals that he embraces the sensecrafting value of honoring the perspectives of others and of creating conditions to encourage dissenting voices.

KROFT: . . . it's been reported that there was some resistance from advisors and planners who disagreed with the commando raid approach. Was it difficult for you to overcome that? And what level of confidence did you have?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: You know one of the things that we've done here is to build a team that is collegial and where everybody speaks their mind. And there's not a lot of snipin' or backbiting after the fact. And what I've tried to do is make sure that every time I sit down in the situation room, every one of my advisors around there knows I expect them to give me their best assessments. And so the fact that there were some who voiced doubts about this approach was invaluable, because it meant the plan was sharper, it meant that we had thought through all of our options, it meant that when I finally did make the decision, I was making it based on the very best information. (Kroft, 2011, para. 45-46)

Finally, Obama, who during his election campaign distinguished himself as a great storyteller, was able to weave together disparate elements together into a cohesive story. As Obama discussed the situation with Kroft (2011), he incorporated messages linked to national pride and honored the many individuals who participated in the long journey to the defeat of bin Laden. The following quotes from Obama are demonstrative:

But ultimately I had so much confidence in the capacity of our guys to carry out the mission that I felt that the risks were outweighed by the potential benefit of us finally getting our man. . . . (para. 8)

They [the CIA] did an incredible job during the course of a year and a half to pull on a number of these threads until we were able to identify a courier who was known to be a bin Laden associate, to be able to track them to this compound. . . . (para. 14)

I mean keep in mind this is something, first of all, that that wasn't just our doing. Obviously since 2001, countless folks in our intelligence community and our military had worked on this issue. President Bush had obviously devoted a lot of

resources to this, and so there was a cumulative effort and a testament to the capacity of the United States of America to follow through. And to do what we said we're gonna do. Even across administrations, across party lines and the skill with which our intelligence and military folks operated in this was indescribable (Kroft, 2011, para. 120).

It is important to note that sensecrafting is just an element of leadership, not a style that should dominate at all times. In fact, the bin Laden assassination shows Obama at his best, mixing both a collaborative approach to collecting multiple perspectives while at the same time knowing when to end any debate and to act resolutely in sensegiving style to bring all the preparation to a swift conclusion in a decisive, bold act.

In this section, I have provided an introduction to my concept of sensecrafting, a style of leadership characterized by engaging others in a process of collective, conscious sensemaking. I revealed what I believe to be some of the key traits of the sensecrafting leader, and then used President Obama's decision to carry out a commando action against Osama bin Laden as an example of sensecrafting in action. Next, I will probe more deeply into the literature that provides a foundation for sensecrafting: constructivism, sensemaking, participative leadership and narrative.

Constructivism

To embark upon our investigation of sensecrafting leadership and the use of story within organizations, some grounding in constructivism will be essential, as this provides an epistemological position from which to understand the terrain under consideration.

Constructivism is rooted in the idea that reality as experience is a construction. Baxter Magolda (2004) articulates a constructivist perspective:

People actively construct or *make meaning* of their experience—they interpret what happens to them, evaluate it using their current perspective, and draw conclusions about what experiences mean to them. The meaning they construct depends on their current assumptions about themselves and the world, conflicting

assumptions they encounter, and the context in which the experience occurs. (p. 31)

Constructivism is a concept that resists easy categorization or apprehension. Freed (2009) explained the difficulty with this endeavor: “Sorting out the varieties of constructivism and constructionism is difficult because (a) differences between the perspectives are often subtle, and (b) the same or similar terms are often used differently in different disciplines and/or by different scholars” (p. 134). Many theorists have focused on the locus of mental activity to categorize the brands of constructivism/constructionism. Going forward, I will use constructivism to speak more generically about the theories that are variously known as constructivism and constructionism, unless quoting directly. The exception will be when referring to social constructionism as conceived by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Gergen (1994). However, before considering the many varieties, let us step back a bit further to the examine the origins of constructivism.

Concepts of constructivism are rooted in the thinking of Immanuel Kant (Werhane, Hartman, Moberg, Englehardt, & Pritchard, 2009), who developed the idea “that what exists is a product of what is thought” (Bruner, 1986, p. 96). According to social constructivism “our conceptual scheme mediates even our most basic perceptual experiences” (Railton, 2003, p. 10). Werhane et al. (2009) asserted, “We learn from Kant that our minds do not mirror experience or reality. Rather, our minds project and reconstitute experience” (p. 8).

Prawat (1996) offered a helpful classification for considering the varieties of constructivism/constructionism. Two are bounded in tradition epistemologies: Radical constructivism, exemplified by Piaget (1957) and the Mechanistic worldview/ Realist

approach characterized by Information Processing theory. These are contrasted with several postmodern types: sociocultural theory, most closely associated with the Soviets, and Vygotsky (1978) in particular; symbolic interactionism, influenced by Mead (1954/1983) and articulated by Blumer (1969); and social constructionism, which is linked to Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Gergen (1994). These approaches are distinguished by several dichotomies. First, there are the underlying assumptions held by the varieties of constructivism, such as positivism vs. postmodernism and realism vs. pragmatism. Another significant polarity is defined by the locus of mental activity: Some place constructivism squarely within the individual, while others insist upon a social role in reality construction. The individual/social dichotomy can alternately be described as a polarity between mind and experience or organism and environment.

Some approaches proffer a kind of truce. Gergen's (1997) social constructionism, for example, seeks to transcend the mind/experience divide through making relationship primary, with language playing the key role of mediator within relationships. Gergen explained that "constructionist language serves neither as a picture or a map of what is the case; rather (following Wittgenstein, 1953), it acquires its meaning from its use within human interchange" (p. 2).

Prawat (1996) articulates what he termed a fourth version of social constructivism, an idea-based social constructivism that has origins in Peirce (1935) and Dewey (1910/2011). For Prawat, ideas are the currency that can transcend the mind/world dichotomy. Thus, Prawat argued that this fourth version is superior to social constructionism because it assigns prominent roles to both the individual and the social. It also more eloquently solves the mind/world dichotomy because ideas "can move back

and forth across the barrier that separates mind from world” (p. 223). Ideas work on both mind and world by:

“educat[ing] attention,” allowing us to access aspects of our environment that otherwise would be ignored or overlooked (Prawat, 1991, 1993). In constructing an idea, individuals, in concert with others, prepare a kind of plan for picking up information that might be provided by the environment. (Prawat & Floden, 1994, p. 39)

Prawat (1996) contrasted this superior fourth version with social constructionism, which he believed:

Takes a more radical stance toward the mind-world dilemma. It abolishes both mind and world: Mind, as an individual entity that accounts for understanding is superfluous; all understanding is linguistic. There is no such thing as a concept independent of language. Because language is a communal enterprise, mind is a communal enterprise. World, if by that one means a reality existing outside of language, is also superfluous. It may exist, but there is no way to get at it other than through the community’s way of talking about it. (p. 223)

Gergen (1997) described social constructionism’s position as “being ontologically mute” (pp. 72-73). According to this perspective, the nature of the world is not being called into question. Immutable laws like gravity are not being made relative. However the authority to bestow meaning to these phenomena is yielded to the community of observers. Gergen asserted that OUR reality emerges from our efforts to talk about it:

There is no foundational description to be made about an ‘out there’ as opposed to an ‘in here,’ about experience or material. Once we attempt to articulate ‘what there is,’ however, we enter the world of discourse. At that moment the process of construction commences, and this effort is inextricably woven into processes of social interchange and into history and culture. (pp. 72-73)

According to the ethos of social constructionism, the only valid criteria are local convention. Relationship and language take up privileged positions in this worldview. “For social constructionism . . . the chief locus of understanding is not in ‘the psyche’ but in social relationships” (Gergen, 1997, p. 1). Prawat (1996) added that in social construction, language bears the “truth,” as it is a by-product of communal relation.

Baxter Magolda (2004) offers another perspective on constructivism, which she terms a “constructivist interpretation of personal epistemology” (p. 41). In developing her concept of *self-authorship*, Baxter Magolda incorporated constructivist assumptions: “realities are multiple, context-bound, and mutually shaped by interaction of the knower and known” (p. 35). Her approach “emphas[izes] . . . the social construction of knowledge and the centrality of personal meaning-making in interpreting experience” (p. 41). Through this arrangement, Baxter Magolda’s constructivism, like Deweyan idea-based constructivism, achieves a balance between the social and individual axis of constructivism. With her emphasis on *self-authorship*, Baxter Magolda also integrates narrative and language, which is primary in Gergen’s (1994) social constructionism. As Baxter Magolda explained, “Becoming the author of one’s life mean[s] taking responsibility for one’s beliefs, identity, and relationships. The internal voice be[comes] the coordinator of meaning-making. . .” (p. 40).

Parks (2000) further delineates characteristics of *self-authorship*: “(1) becoming critically aware of one’s own composing of reality, (2) self-consciously participating in an ongoing dialogue toward truth, and (3) cultivating a capacity to respond-to act-in ways that are satisfying and just” (p. 6). Having epistemological roots in constructivism and concerned with a narrative approach to the construction of reality, *self-authorship* is a helpful construct for apprehending sensecrafting.

Another constructivist, Bruner (1991), made significant contributions to the view of reality as a narrative construction. Bruner asserted:

We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative--stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is a conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual’s level of mastery and by his conglomerate of prosthetic devices, colleagues, and mentors. (p. 4)

He continued by explaining:

What gives the story its unity is the manner in which plight characters, and consciousness interact to yield a structure that has a start, a development, and a 'sense of ending.' . . . What one seeks in story structure is precisely how [these elements] are integrated. (p. 21)

Goodman (1978) introduced an additive aspect to reality construction. According to Goodman, we each construct that which we perceive as reality by stitching together taken for granted premises that constitute existing constructed worlds. Through these processes, individuals take attributes of existing world versions to create new versions. Bruner (1990) described the central thesis of Goodman's constructivism as "there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language; that what we call the world is a product of some mind whose symbolic procedures construct the world" (p. 95).

While Goodman (1978) focused on the primacy of symbol as a constituent of the constructed world, other theorists have considered how the structure of the mind itself shapes the world that we perceive. According to Mitroff and Linstone (1993):

the experience of reality as well as its description are heavily dependent on the structure of our minds. . . . Contrary to the common-sense notion that reality is 'something out there' uninfluenced by human minds, we humans contribute a great deal of our nature to what we experience as reality and how we describe it. (p. 57)

The structure of our minds tends to play itself out in the perceiving of patterns that exist in reality.

The source of the patterns more likely stems from the instrument with which we perceive, it is argued. Mitroff and Linstone (1993) provided a compelling example of this phenomenon by explaining that over time, a wine glass holds a variety of wines that differ in color, bouquet, and taste. However, from the wine glass' perspective, one

constant is the shape that the wine takes—the very shape imparted by the glass itself. It would be a very evolved wine glass indeed that would have the self-awareness to understand its own role in this repetitive shaping pattern; if the wine glass had consciousness, it could be forgiven for believing that the ‘shape’ of wine was a naturally occurring phenomena, independent of itself. Theorists argue, that in a similar manner, our sensing instrument, the mind, takes in the world in such a way that we perceive patterns as *out there*. But, like the shape of wine, these patterns are more an artifact of the structure of our minds.

Sorting through the varieties of constructivism and social construction, I adopt the following assumptions in creating a foundation from my theory of sensecrafting:

- The Kantian ideas of “that what exists is a product of what is thought,” (Bruner, 1986, p. 96) and “our minds do not mirror . . . reality” (Werhane et al., 2009, p. 8).
- The dichotomies between individual/social and mind/world are transcended through both language and ideas. Language accomplishes this through discourse: “Once we attempt to articulate ‘what there is,’ . . . we enter the world of discourse. At that moment the process of construction commences, and this effort is inextricably woven into processes of social interchange and into history and culture” (Gergen, 1997, pp. 72-73). Ideas achieve transcendence because they “can move back and forth across the barrier that separates mind from world” (Prawat, 1996, p. 223).
- “Realities are multiple, context-bound, and mutually shaped by interaction of the knower and known” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 35).
- Narrative and language take on a prominent position in organizing our constructions of reality, meaning that “we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative,” (Bruner, 1991, p. 4).
- Our constructions of reality build on what we and others have previously constructed (Goodman, 1978).
- Cognitive structures shape how we perceive and construct our worlds (Mitroff & Linstone, 1993).

Building on this constructivist perspective, I have created a diagram to model the way in which I believe we create reality (see Figure 1). In my model, the *world out there* may or may not exist in an objective sense. What matters most is that, due to our physical limitations, we can only take in subsets of that world. The spotlight like drawings in the figure below represents this phenomenon. What the spotlight ‘sees’ is governed by some critical factors: (a) where we cast our attention and (b) the mental models that we hold. The mental models are comprised of our values, beliefs, and assumptions. We could think of the mental models as providing a sort of lens through which our attention is cast. Both mental models and the choices that govern our attention are derived from the world versions of others. Together mental models and attention define what we select to perceive from the world out there. This content further passes through perceptual filters as we fit new content into our existing worldview. The output of this process makes up what seems to be ‘seen.’ What is ‘seen’ is different from ‘the world out there’. It is a product of our perception. Next we interpret that which is seen and finally take some action. The act of taking action influences both our mental models and the world of which we are a part.

Nature of perception. The first filtering choice we make is when we cast a glance. By choosing something as the object of our glance, we have also chosen not to attend to something else. I am reminded of how I first became aware of this phenomenon. In a college class on filmmaking we were discussing the biases of newscasts—in particular—the biases of Soviet reporting (it was the late 1980s). I suddenly had an *a-ha* insight that every pointing of the camera is just as powerful a form of editing as is cutting the film. The camera eye is like a type of knife that dissects its environment, seeing this, ignoring that. Chia (2000) built on this cutting metaphor, stating: “. . . we start with ‘an

undifferentiated flux of fleeting sense-impressions and it is out of this brute aboriginal flux of lived experience that attention carves out and conception names” (p. 3).

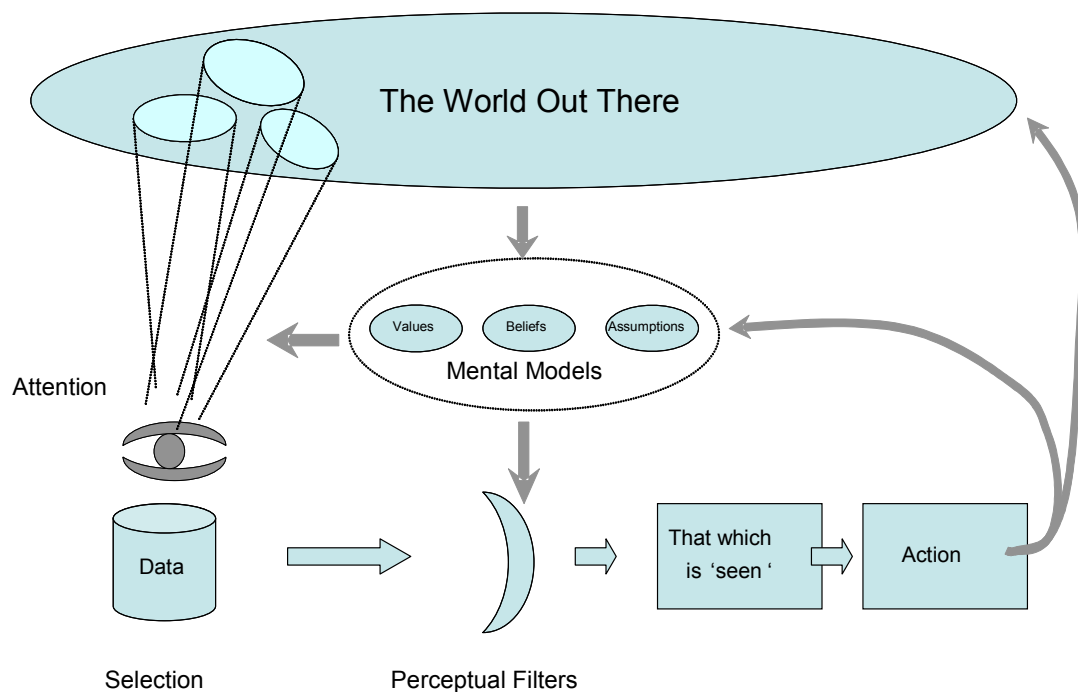


Figure 1. A model of perception.

Jeff Widener’s iconic photograph from the 1989 protests in China’s Tiananmen Square (originally published by the Associated Press) can help to illustrate this point. In the photo, a lone figure stands, defiant but dwarfed, facing down four Chinese tanks (Widener, 2009). One could imagine a different angle where all we saw was a lone man standing in the street, with the menacing tank gone, lurking just outside the edge of the photo. In this case, the photo would have lost all of its meaning. Just such a trope is employed in Verizon TV commercials. In one ad, an everyday type guy is found in a field having a conversation with three apparent hoodlums. The hoods’ speech is threatening

and the main character seems as lonely as the revolutionary standing in front of the tanks. But then as the thug is saying, “I thought I told you to come *alone*,” the camera pulls back to reveal the legions of support our hero has from the people at Verizon. Suddenly, it is the thug who looks small and vulnerable.

At least three types of biases effect the selection and filtering process: these include our assumptions, our language and our expectations. Mitroff and Linstone (1993) point out that some of these chains are constituted by assumptions through which we see the world in the first place: “The data one collects from the world are a strong function of the images, models, and/or theories we have of it” (p. 62).

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) made a similar observation: “Our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it” (p. 3). Such filtering effects are exhibited in the Pygmalion effect uncovered by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968/1992). In this study, the actions of teachers conform to their expectations of student performance, independent of the previous performance of the students. This suggests that an expectation effect influenced the teachers’ perception and actions: I expect to see positive classroom behavior in certain students, so I treat those students like I expect them to perform well, and I am primed to more readily see the good performance that I expect. Weick (1995) drew a tie between the function of expectations and their effect on sensemaking: “It is precisely because expectations can serve as strong filters that their formation and activation are crucial for sensemaking” (p. 146).

Language has a profound influence on our perceptions. If we do not have words for something, of course it becomes difficult to share our perceptions with others. But language might also shape that which we can even perceive. There is a famous myth

about Inuits having an extensive vocabulary to name various types of *snow*, while in English, we have perhaps two words: *snow* and *sleet* (Goodman, 1978). One can see the practicality of having a deep lexicon to describe something that is such an indelible aspect of the environment for the Inuit. In an environment where people live in a direct relationship with a nature characterized by endless winter, the ability to differentiate qualities of snow would be vital. Wolf (1999) came to a similar conclusion about the relationship between language and perception: “In fact I began to think that we couldn’t really perceive the world unless we had some form of language to think about it” (p. 45).

Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) perspective emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality. This is represented in my perceptual model (see Figure 1 on page 46) by the arrow traveling from *the world out there* to our mental models. Our mental models are not an innate quality that we enter into this world possessing, but rather are built up over time. We glean our values from the culture in which we are embedded. Our beliefs come from the collective stories that we tell ourselves about how the world works. Likewise, our assumptions are the shorthand that we tell ourselves, heuristics that help us to reduce the equivocality of our environment.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) described how the behavior of two people, called *A* and *B*, evolves from idiosyncratic to institutionalized. First, typifications are produced as each watches the other perform and begins to attribute motives to the other’s behavior. Soon, as *A* perceives typical behaviors in *B*, *A* thinks “A-ha, there he goes again” (p. 56). *A* and *B* use a process of mirroring and begin to pattern their behavior after one another and begin to define roles. “There he goes again,” becomes “There we go again.” Expanding on the example, Berger and Luckmann (1966) imagined that *A* and *B* are parents: “The habitualizations and typifications undertaken in the common life of *A* and

B, formations that until this point still had the quality of ad hoc conceptions of two individuals, now become historical institutions” (p. 58). This occurs because the habitualizations and typifications become the object of the third party observer (the child). “The institutions are now experienced as possessing a reality of their own” (p. 58).

Prior to the third party observer, “*A* and *B* alone are responsible for having constructed this world. *A* and *B* remain capable of changing or abolishing it. . . . the world thus shaped appears fully transparent to them.” However, the child does not share the transparency. “Since they [the child] had no part in shaping it, it confronts them as a given reality that, like nature, is opaque in places at least” (p. 59). Now “there we go again” becomes “This is how these things are done” (p. 59). The habitualizations and typifications of *A* and *B* have become institutionalized. One can imagine that, as the child matures, she takes on an increasing role in her own social construction of reality.

The next important component to reality construction is *enactment* (Pondy & Mitroff, 1979; Weick, 1995). Pondy and Mitroff explained, “I use the word enactment to preserve the fact that, in organizational life, people often produce part of the environment they face” (p. 17). Referring to Figure 1 (see page 46), we see that our actions stem from our perceptions of the world. As we act, however, we likely change the environment that we are in, and potentially update our mental models as we observe the outcomes of our actions. So our actions become an enactment of the environment of which we are a part. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) explained, “people organize to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly” (p. 7).

Mary Park Follett’s (1995) unique contribution to management research was the identification of the importance of reflexivity and relationship: People are altered by their

interactions with others. Returning to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *A* and *B*, Follett would argue that *A* becomes a different *A* for having interacted with *B*. Likewise, each activity that one engages in changes the activity itself. Follett refers to this additive quality of interaction as *plusvalents*: it is much like the word commonly used today, *synergy*, which represents that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Mental models. Our mental models heavily influence the nature of our perception. I will further explicate mental models here to provide a base of understanding for considering sensemaking and sensecrafting. Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that most organizations, and their members, operate on the basis of unconscious *theories-in-use* that value avoiding conflict and potential embarrassment. This pervasive strategy inhibits meaningful learning; while organizations may be able to identify and act on improvement opportunities, their theories-in-use dictate that they not probe into the *reasons* that these improvement opportunities came to exist in the first place. Simple improvements that fail to inquire into how the problem arose are the products of what Argyris and Schön termed *single-loop learning*, or “instrumental learning that changes strategies of action or assumptions underlying strategies in ways that leave the values of a theory of action unchanged” (p. 20). A deeper kind of learning occurs with *double-loop learning*. “By double-loop learning, we mean learning that results in a change in the values of theory-in-use, as well as in its strategies and assumptions” (p. 21). Without this type of learning, Argyris (1999) asserted, “The seed for tomorrow’s deterioration . . . lie in the very practices that produce successful outcomes today” (p. 1).

The core of double-loop learning is that changes occur to what Argyris and Schön (1996) called the learner’s *theory-in-use*. An individual’s theory-in-use is usually quite different from her *espoused theory*, or what she believes about the motives for her

actions. Argyris and Schön's conception has a parallel with Schein's (2004) levels of culture. Schein argues that the most visible elements of culture, its *artifacts*, are determined by two underlying levels, *espoused beliefs and values* ("strategies, goals, and philosophies") and *underlying assumptions* ("unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings") (p. 26). Many researchers have termed these underlying assumptions *mental models* (Senge, 1990).

A mental model is a concept believed to have been originated by Craik (1943) in The Nature of Explanation. Craik hypothesized that individuals possess "a 'small-scale model' of external reality" (p. 61). The idea gained traction in cognitive science and cognitive psychology. O'Keefe and Nadel (1978) define mental maps as "an aggregate of interrelated information" (p. 63). Johnson-Laird (2004), a cognitive psychologist, saw mental models as intimately related to perception and thinking: "Perception yields a mental model, linguistic comprehension yields a mental model, and thinking and reasoning are the internal manipulations of mental models" (p. 179).

According to Barr, Stimpert, and Huff (1992), mental models play three key roles. They influence perception by filtering what information the individual attends to (Nisbett & Ross, 1980); they allow an individual to interpret incoming data, thus "the stimuli gaining attention tend to be interpreted in relation to the individual's current mental model" (Barr et al., 1992, p. 17); and mental models direct action (Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

Senge (1990) brought the concept of mental models to a wider management audience. He is quick to point out that the idea was not new, citing Plato's parable of the cave and Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Emperor's New Clothes* as early exemplars. Senge deliberately builds off the work of Argyris and Schön (1978), translating their term *theories-in-use* as *mental model*. Senge (1990) provides the

following definition for mental models: “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world” (p. 8).

According to Daft and Weick (1984), mental models are created as individuals interpret events. In their theory, the learning process is comprised of three phases: Scanning (taking in information), Interpretation (giving the data meaning) and Learning (taking action). Our mental models become the place where we store information that we learn about the world. And, because they help guide our actions and what we attend to in the future, mental models influence what new data we allow into our awareness. Hence, mental models have a self-fulfilling character (Barr et al., 1992).

Another important feature of mental models is that they are frequently tacit (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Senge, 1990). When mental models remain below the threshold of awareness, the effects of these models can lead to delusions of objectivity. For example, if I am not aware of how my perceptions and reasoning have been influenced by my mental models, then I might have a difficult time understanding why someone else would not arrive at the same conclusion as me. Instead, I might perceive my conclusions as obvious and not open to interpretation.

Argyris and Senge and their colleagues have developed a number of techniques to bring mental models into conscious awareness, thereby facilitating double-loop learning. These techniques cover three general areas: reflecting, verbal processing and reconsidering (Senge et al., 1999). A common thread in these activities is that mental models are suspended, or held out in front of the thinker, so that she can consider how the mental models shape perceptions and thinking itself. The techniques for bringing mental models into conscious awareness were outlined in the Researcher’s Repertoire section of Definition of Terms in chapter 1.

In this section, I have explored the varieties of constructivism and have articulated that for the purposes of this study, I am adopting a stance aligned with Baxter Magolda's (2004) concept of a constructivist interpretation of personal epistemology. I accept that the worlds that we perceive as real are the products of our minds, including the influence of culture and social forces on our mental models, and that language and narrative are the primary instruments through which we engage in social construction. After establishing this constructivist grounding, I offered a model of my own understanding of how perception and mental models interplay to allow us to construct our worlds. I then explored in some greater depth the literature on perception and mental models. The focus of this paper now moves to sensemaking, which considers how we go about attributing meaning to that which we create and perceive.

Sensemaking

In this section, I will review how the concept of sensemaking has been presented within the literature. This review will provide grounding for how organizational thinkers conceive of sensemaking as a pervasive, often unconscious activity, and as a natural human trait, which is concerned with our deep-rooted struggle for meaning.

Sensemaking is a topic of inquiry that considers how people come to place new experiences into the context of their pre-existing worldview. While many investigations of sensemaking focus on making sense of dramatic events that are quite different from the individual's everyday context, sensemaking is actually an activity that happens constantly. Weick (1995), in his seminal *Sensemaking in Organizations*, characterized the inquiry of sensemaking as an investigation of "how [people] construct what they construct, why, and with what effects . . ." (p. 4). Weick initially postulated seven properties of sensemaking:

- Grounded in identity construction: The sensemaker and the activity of sensemaking are inseparable.
- Retrospective: Sensemaking occurs as a reflection on the past (often the immediate past).
- Enactive of sensible environments: The sensemaker participates in the creation of the environment.
- Social: Sensemaking produces shared meaning and recognizes a contingency on the behavior of others.
- Ongoing: Sensemaking never starts and never stops.
- Focused on and by extracted cues which Weick defines as “simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring” (p. 50).
- Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy: Sensemaking is concerned with motivating action, rather than insisting upon accuracy, sensemaking elevates the role of “plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, creation, invention, and instrumentality” (p. 57).

I detect a contradiction, or perhaps a paradox, between two of the properties of sensemaking defined by Weick (1995): *ongoing* and *triggered by cues*. On the one hand, Weick characterized sensemaking as “never starting” (p. 43) and “never stop[ping]” (p. 49). On the other, he frequently spoke of *occasions* for sensemaking. I interpret *occasions* as referring to discrete events that at least suggest a beginning and ending. consider The following quotes from Weick further reveal the contradiction:

“Sensemaking never starts. The reason it never starts is that pure duration never stops. People are always in the middle of things, which become things, only when those same people focus on the past from some point beyond it” (p. 43).

“Sensemaking is ongoing and neither starts fresh nor stops cleanly.” (p. 49)

“Interruption is a common antecedent of sensemaking occasions” (p. 91)

“People have to experience the discrepancy and experience it as such if sensemaking is to start” (p. 91)

It seems to me that the only way to reconcile the apparent contradiction between ongoing sensemaking and triggered sensemaking is to think of varieties of sensemaking: those that are more or less conscious or deliberate. With sensecrafting, I am attempting to define a variety of sensemaking that is particularly characterized by a deliberate and active effort to make sense independent of any prompting. With sensecrafting, I mean to call attention to a state of un-triggered sensemaking—not sensemaking occasions, but rather, to a heightened state of awareness that is cultivated intentionally. Thus, it is not so much an occasion, but rather a way of being.

To further set off what I mean by sensecrafting from Weick's (1995) characterization of sensemaking, consider his emphasis of the sensemaking property of retrospect. George Herbert Mead (1956) articulated retrospect in this way: "We are conscious always of what we have done, never of doing it" (p. 136). This is precisely one of the domains in which I would like to challenge the art of sensemaking, calling it to a higher level of consciousness. Why could we not be more conscious of what we are doing, *while* we are doing it? This is one of the attributes that set sensecrafting apart from sensemaking.

Weick (1995) asserted "The feeling of order, clarity, and rationality is an important goal of sensemaking, which means that once this feeling is achieved, further retrospective processing stops" (p. 29). With sensecrafting, I want to suggest a mental activity that is not satisfied with merely attaining a feeling of clarity and order, but rather a mental activity that seeks to push past that comfortable feeling, that continually asks what else is possible, that is constantly vigilant and in pursuit of a more elusive interpretation of events and holds the possibility of being more generative.

Ten years after introducing these seven properties, Weick updated his understanding of sensemaking, asserting that “The emerging picture is one of sensemaking as a process that is ongoing, instrumental, subtle, swift, social, and easily taken for granted” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 1). The new emphasis here is on subtlety, swiftness, and that which is taken for granted, which I equate with an unconscious acceptance. These characteristics, in particular, can make the process of sensemaking something difficult to catch in action.

Indeed, Kegan (1982) emphasized the pervasiveness of sensemaking by equating the process of sensemaking with the activity of human being itself: “The activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making” (p. 11). In outlining his constructive-developmental framework, Kegan calls out the primacy of sensemaking to his work, saying that the “evolution of meaning” is the core phenomenon with which he is concerned.

Consistent with his conception of sensemaking as the prime activity of human being, Kegan (1982) equated an inability to make-sense with the loss of one’s composure. Although Weick (1995) said that sensemaking is an ongoing activity, in its most observable form, sensemaking is triggered by events that, momentarily at least, defy sensemaking. We saw such sense-defying events in the Mann-Gulch tragedy and the Hudson River landing. This occurs when the familiar patterns of making sense are unable to process information, and a new scheme must be developed to incorporate the data. Hence, according to Weick et al. (2005), “Sensemaking starts with chaos” (p. 1). Weick et al. further elaborated regarding the sensemaking process:

an expectation of continuity is breached, ongoing organized collective action becomes disorganized, efforts are made to construct a plausible sense of what is

happening, and this sense of plausibility normalizes the breach, restores the expectation, and enables projects to continue. (p. 8)

We have seen a hint of the connection between sensemaking and constructivism, suggested by Kegan (1982) above. We can further hear constructivist echoes in Balogun and Johnson's (2005) description of the sensemaking process: "the change consequences . . . that develop in one period of sensemaking, then become part of the inputs to the next time period. Earlier schemata and outcomes become the ground for subsequent ones" (p. 1589). A. Brown (2000) made a more explicit connection between sensemaking and constructivism, attributing to Berger and Luckmann (1966) the idea that "it is by means of sensemaking that the social world is enacted, 'creating' organizations and their environments" (p. 46).

Sensemaking seems to act like a primal storytelling force within humans. It is the story that we tell ourselves about what is going on. Sensemaking is triggered when there is a breach in the continuity of such stories (Weick, et al., 2005). Maitlis and Lawrence (2007) found that sensemaking arises under conditions of ambiguity and unpredictability. Other sensemaking triggers have been variously identified as surprise (Choo, 2006), disruptions, the unexpected, uncertainty (Weick, et al., 2005), disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991), inconsistent information (Schwandt, 2005), and "a failure to confirm oneself" (Weick, 1995, p. 23). The common theme to all of these triggers is that something presents itself that no longer fits in with story that the individual is telling himself. It is a compulsion to regain coherence that leads the individual to engage in sensemaking. However, sensemaking is a purely pragmatic endeavor.

Faced with events that disrupt normal expectations and, hence, the efficacy of established patterns of meaning and associated behavior, individuals attempt to make sense of ambiguous stimuli in ways that respond to their own identity needs . . . The story is a sufficiently plausible account of "what is happening out there?"

that it can serve as a landscape within which they and others might be able to make commitments and to act in ways that serve to establish new meanings and new patterns of behavior. (Weick et al., 2005, p. 10)

The sensemaker does not seek truth, but instead will be satisfied with whatever holds enough plausibility to carry the storyline forward and to allow action to resume.

Sensemaking, with its close relation to meaning and storytelling, lays a foundation for sensecrafting, which I conceive as a style of leadership that engages the collective in the process of creating stories to clarify meaning and to support organizational action. Next I will outline in detail the qualities of deliberate sensemaking, which are a critical component of sensecrafting.

Deliberate sensemaking has been described as having nine qualities or tasks (see Figure 2). The first task of the conscious sensemaker is to lay a foundation for experiencing reality by setting a learning intention. In a world that we construct, our intentions are critical, for they have a great bearing on what we perceive and what we make of what we perceive. Conscious sensemaking begins with a learning intention. The intent to learn establishes a state of mind receptive to the other eight qualities of conscious sensemaking: tolerance for ambiguity, discernment, openness, framing, mindfulness, envisioning, action, and reflection. The following sections discuss each quality in detail.

Learning intention. Referring back to Figure 1 (see page 46), a learning intention means a willingness to be flexible with one's mental models. Entertaining different mental models, or perspectives, will result in the individual attending to stimuli that are different from that to which she is accustomed, and will open the way to interpret these stimuli in novel ways.

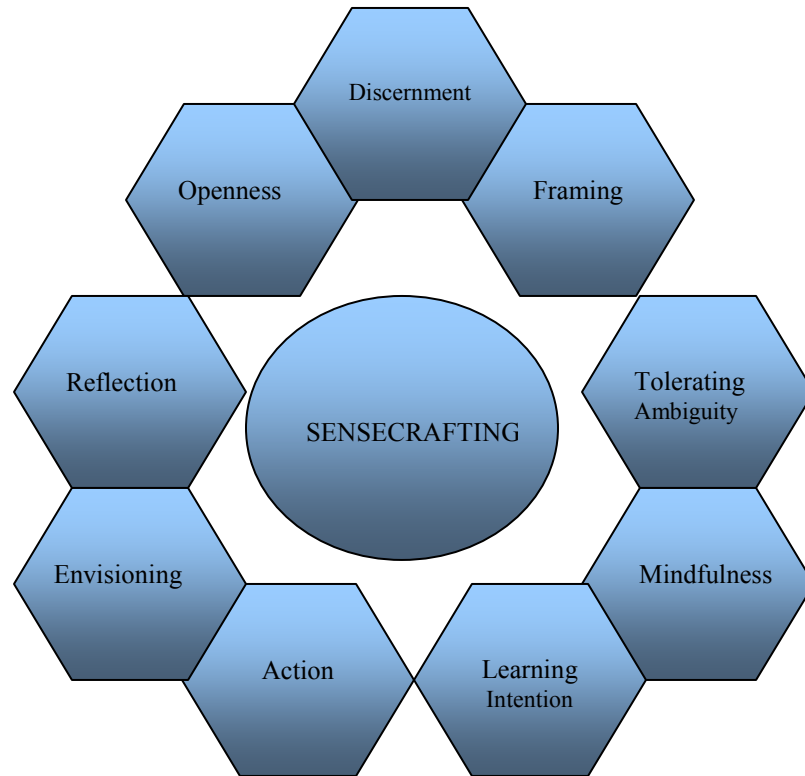


Figure 2. The nine qualities of sensecrafting.

Boyatzis and McKee (1995) speak of *intentional change* as being a key quality for a resonant leader. Intentional change is characterized by “deliberate, focused identification of our personal vision and our current reality, and conscious creation of and engaging in a learning agenda” (p. x). Contrast this with the reactive leader who seeks to maintain underlying mental models, a behavior that Schön (1971) termed *dynamic conservatism*. On the other hand, according to Mitroff (1978), “The learning manager is willing to modify, even to destroy, some central aspects of the organization’s boundaries and patterns of relations so he can construct new ones” (p. 142). Werhane (1999) calls a failure to learn *moral amnesia*, or “an inability to remember or learn from one’s own and others’ past mistakes and to transfer that knowledge when fresh challenges arise” (p. 7).

The key quality of the learning intention is receptivity to information that may cause changes in one's underlying mental models. The result is that changes in one's perspective (Schwandt, 2005), or even multiple perspectives (Mitroff, 1978), can be entertained. These shifts provide an opening for the novel to emerge. Mitroff explained, "The learning manager . . . does not react. He innovates by reflecting and then creating original response patterns" (p. 141).

Suspending reactions is critical as unconscious sensemaking is often triggered by dissonance when the current mental models are unable to seamlessly explained data and fit the data into the expected narrative. This evokes a process described by Schwandt (2005): "If meaning can't be assigned because of incongruent, or missing, sensemaking frameworks, the constructivist's learning orientation encourages the individual to critically examine present sensemaking frameworks" (p. 186).

The key point to be understood about the learning intention is that it creates an awareness that one's current mental models are just one out of many possibilities and that a richer understanding of the world can be gleaned if one has the courage to scrutinize and possibly revise one's dominant mental models. To the extent that an individual can hold this intention, she opens to the possibility of moving from unconscious sensemaking (which occurs when confronted with dissonance) toward conscious sensemaking, which requires no trigger.

Tolerance for ambiguity. Tolerance for ambiguity means having an accepting attitude toward what appears to be contradictory. The operative word is appears. As the section on perception and constructivism articulated, how things appear to us dominates how we perceive the world. Appearances do not equal reality, but often must suffice as a proxy; the real world can never be apprehended without our filtering mechanisms.

Therefore, something that appears to be ambiguous might not actually be ambiguous; ambiguity is a temporary state, endowed by the perceiver, not an inherent state characteristic of the object being perceived. Things are only ambiguous in the context of some frame.

So, in dealing with apparent ambiguity, patience is needed. Rather than avoiding ambiguity or becoming paralyzed by apparent contradiction, ambiguity calls out for us to integrate and transcend. By integrating, we embrace all the paradoxical aspects of an ambiguous situation. By transcending, we move beyond that place and develop a frame where what had once appeared ambiguous is now seen as a part of a larger whole, a whole large enough to contain the ambiguous object's paradoxes.

Ambiguous situations create tension for us, and this tension is not something that we should attempt to avoid. Rather, it provides the platform from which we can engage in transformative learning. "Transcend and include," is how Wilber (2000) described it. Kegan (1982) asserted that we are all pulled between two great human yearnings. On the one hand is our desire to belong, to be *a part* of something; on the other, we seek independence, to be *apart*. Kegan (1982) declared that it is the *relation* between the two yearnings that is most vital to understand. He says, "I believe [the relation] is a lifelong tension. Our experience of this fundamental ambivalence may be our experience of the unitary, restless, creative motion of life itself" (p. 107).

If we fail to tolerate ambiguity, we risk resigning ourselves to a limited framework and potentially fail to grow. Evolution comes from our struggle to transcend the opposites. According to Mezirow (1991), "When experience is too strange or threatening to the way we think or learn, we tend to block it out or resort to psychological defense mechanisms to provide a more compatible interpretation" (p. 4). Such a response

inhibits learning and shuts down the possibility of challenging our existing mental models. Referring back to the model in Figure 1 (see page 46), when we avoid the challenges brought on by coping with ambiguity, our learning becomes short-circuited (imagine a break in the feedback loop flowing from action to mental models). Our actions will still shape the world that we experience, but we will be stuck in a self-perpetuating cycle where the world seems to conform more and more to our model of it, and any disconfirming information is suppressed.

Discernment. Discernment relates to how we define our world, how we separate figure from ground. It is intimately tied with framing. While framing tells us where to look, discernment makes sense of what we are seeing. The act of discerning is like pointing the camera lens. By directing the camera lens at one thing and not at another thing, we imply that what we have framed is what is important. Discernment is much like choosing a particular path to journey down; before we select a path, our final destination has limitless possibility. But, as soon as we choose, the destination has been significantly narrowed.

Klein (1999) explained, “. . . the importance of spotting leverage points--seeing opportunities and being able to make adjustments to take advantage of them. These leverage points may be visible to experts but invisible to novices” (p. 153). Here we see discernment characterized as the ability to suss out what is of most importance. Thayer (1988) emphasized how listening with discernment is the mark of a good leader:

To say that a leader should be a good listener is not saying much: to what should a leader listen, and to whom, and how? A leader is not a listener; he or she is discerner. The difference is profound: the one is but a trick, rather easily performed by anyone who wants to make the effort. Discernment implies wisdom. (pp. 257-258)

We must discern—because we are unable to process everything at once. But by keeping an awareness of the nature of our discerning, by recognizing that *we have made a selection about what we would attend to*, we keep ourselves open to the possibility of revising our choices.

The motivating force of sensemaking comes from a desire for stability, to steady the moving target of experience long enough to enable action. According to Weick et al. (2005):

Sensemaking is about labeling and categorizing to stabilize the streaming of experience. Labeling works through a strategy of “differentiation and simple-location, identification and classification, regularizing and routinization [to translate] the intractable or obdurate into a form that is more amenable to functional deployment. (pp. 134-135)

Discernment is a key technique used to achieve this stability. Our discerning is, in turn, influenced by our mental models, which become the lenses through which we cast our gaze.

Discernment is not just a private experience for the sensecrafting leader, but rather a skill that must be combined with collective sensemaking. For example, Mehl-Madrona (2010) pointed out “Australian elders also teach that all stories and all versions of the same story are true, and that discernment comes in knowing when and how to use a story and for what purpose,” (Introduction, para. 4). As we shall see, the discernment within storytelling is vital for the sensecrafting leader.

Openness. Openness can be thought of as a polarity to discernment, while discernment is characterized by selection, framing, precision and definition, openness is characterized by possibility, the unexpected, the new, and the different. An open approach connotes receptivity to all the possible ways of approaching a situation.

Weick (1990) referred to one technique of openness as *reconnaissance* which he defines as “lowering one’s defenses, seeing fully, looking again at things one considers already understood, capturing previously undetected nuances, and developing high-variety languages to describe what is discovered” (p. 313). *Reconnaissance* is a French word, whose roots break down as “to know again”; this is similar to our use of the word *remember*. *To know again* can be thought of as reframing—looking again to the situation to consider what aspects should be selected and what should be left out. Reconnaissance is a form of openness that recognizes that what has been discerned was a function of our filtering process. It connotes openness to selecting anew, perhaps using different filters, and recognizing that multiple perspectives can exist simultaneously. Openness also embodies the concept that just because two people have different perspectives, it does not follow that one is wrong and the other right. In fact, there may be a bigger frame that can accommodate both perspectives in a manner that allows both to be true at the same time. The quality of openness means staying receptive to these multiple possible realities, to never closing oneself off to some imagined finitude.

Framing. Referring to my model of perception (see Figure 1 on page 46), framing occupies the middle territory of the model. Our frames are defined by our values, beliefs, and assumptions (Bartunek, 1984). These serve as a filter through which all observable data must pass. When we make meaning, we seek to stabilize the situation, to declare what it is that is going on. Once we bring that which is within our frame into focus, we are no longer attending to the process that we use to select the object of our attention. Having been brought into focus, the object serves to anchor our awareness, providing the stability that humans crave.

Framing is intimately connected to sensemaking. Our frames, like the frame around a photograph, represent the slice of reality that we have carved out to give our attention to. According to Weick (1995), “To understand sensemaking is to be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments” (p. 43). What is left out of the frame remains outside of our conscious awareness. Therefore, the choice of framing is critical to meaning making. According to Dervin, “One of the premises of Sense making is that there is an inherent intertwined connection between how you look at a situation and what sense of it you are able to construct of it” (p. 39). Usually the framing mechanism itself operates outside of our level of conscious awareness. By coupling framing with the other properties of a sensecrafting leader (Learning Intention, Tolerating Ambiguity, Discernment, Openness, Mindfulness, Envisioning, Action, and Reflection) we may exhibit the consciousness to perceive our frames and to be deliberate about how we frame.

However, there is a risk with framing, for it both constitutes our meaning-making system and is the mechanism through which we perceive the world. Brookfield (1990) noted a significant concern: “Attempting to understand our frameworks of understanding by using those very same frameworks is highly problematic” (p. 29). The problem is akin to a fish comprehending the water that it lives in and must not leave if it wishes to survive. When we reconsider our frames, we run the risk of altering how we interpret reality in a dramatic way. Frames are necessary. Without them we become totally adrift in a ‘flux of undifferentiated meaning’ (Choo, 2006, p. 3). But frames are also problematic. They are only a heuristic, a representation of events, not the events themselves. As soon as the individual has lost sight of the fact that he is framing, he

becomes subject to his frames. They control him and the way that he perceives. The trouble grows deeper if he accepts his perceptions as reality.

Drath and Palus' (1994) description of meaning making further demonstrates the similarities between that process and framing:

If meaning can be thought of as naming, interpreting, and making commitments to actions, to other people, and to values, then meaning-making is the *process* [italics added] of creating names, interpretations, and commitments. Meaning-making is all about constructing a sense of what is, what actually exists, and, of that, what is important. (p. 9)

Meaning-*making* refers to the practice of assigning meaning to an object, thereby creating a relationship between the object and the way that the object is understood.

According to Drath and Palus (1994), meaning-making is a competency in which Winston Churchill excelled as he guided Great Britain through the horrors of World War II. Churchill did not merely make use of meaning by “reflecting meanings that were already present” (p. 10), but he also created meaning by “connecting meanings to one another in new ways appropriate to the unique demands of the situation” (p. 10).

Churchill helped his country to establish the frames that funneled their thinking. In this way, he could reshape the thinking of a nation and provide a foothold for hope in an otherwise desperate situation. Churchill's influence was so profound that it has experienced a renaissance in the popular WWII era posters “Keep Calm and Carry On.”

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is a term that requires definition. Weick and Putnam (2006) provide a helpful breakdown of the term from both the Eastern and Western perspective. Western definitions include “enhanced attention to and awareness of current experience or present reality” (K. Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822), and mindfulness as used by Ellen Langer (1989), which Weick and Putnam (2006) describe as:

(a) active differentiation and refinement of existing distinctions (p. 138); (b) creation of new discrete categories out of the continuous streams of events that flow through activities (p. 157); and (c) a more nuanced appreciation of context and of alternative ways to deal with it (p. 159). (p. 5)

In the East, mindfulness is considered an important goal of meditation practice. Buddhism “suggests means of enhancing attentional stability and clarity, and of then using these abilities in the introspective examination of conscious states to pursue the fundamental issues concerning consciousness itself” (Wallace, 2005, p. 5). In Vipassana meditation, “[w]hen you first become aware of something, there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing, before you identify it. That is a state of awareness” (Gunaratana, 2002, p. 138).

Broadly speaking, the differences between the Eastern and Western conception of mindfulness relate to apprehending the essence of things (Eastern) and bringing attention and clarity to a subject (Western). While Langer’s (1989) definition includes drawing distinctions between objects and properly categorizing, Eastern views of mindfulness tend to be explicitly opposed to any kind of labeling. Once we label, we reduce the object to simply being a member of some class, and therefore fail to see the object in all of its uniqueness. Once a thing is named, we tend to withdraw the quality of attention that is seeking to understand the object, and place it within a context. If we can hold an object in an unnamed, uncategorized state, we can continue to see all of its possible relations; once named, many potentialities are closed off.

The Western sense of mindfulness, broadly defined, can be thought of as “pay[ing] more attention to external events and to the content of the mind” (Weick & Putnam, 2006, p. 275). Whatever object is being considered is considered fully, without distraction. Boyatzis and McKee (1995) define mindfulness as “being awake, aware, and

attending—to ourselves and to the world around us” (p. x). Ellen Langer (1989) conceives mindfulness to include awareness, curiosity, and cognitive openness. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2002), an American who studies Buddhism, defines mindfulness as moment-to-moment awareness.

The type of mindfulness intended in this discussion is one that is concerned with the *process* of meaning-making, rather than the end product of meaning-making. Perhaps this is a definition that stands somewhere between the typical Eastern and Western conceptualizations of the term. When we are concerned with the integrity of the process, we will be willing to retrace the process steps in order to check the validity of our frames, assumptions and biases. We will remain open to, even inviting of, the possibility that our conclusion should be altered. In contrast, those wed to the outcome will resist revisiting the process, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. As Tolstoy (1930) observed:

I know that most men, including those at ease with problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives, (p. 124).

Our assumptions take on the quality of a house of cards. Once we have built our conclusions, our stories, even to some extent our identity, around the products of our mental models, it becomes a potentially self-effacing task to revise the underlying mental models that brought us to our current take on reality.

Mezirow’s (1991) concept of perspective transformation is aligned with what I am referring to as mindfulness:

Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more

inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings, (p. 14).

Mezirow (1991) also offered a normative judgment of perspectives, asserting that “[m]eaning perspectives that permit us to deal with a broader range of experience, to be more discriminating, to be more open to other perspectives, and to better integrate our experiences are superior perspectives” (p. 14). The type of perspectives that Mezirow (1991) advocated seem aligned with several of the characteristics that I have associated with conscious sensemaking. We can see in Mezirow’s quote the presence of discernment, openness, tolerance for ambiguity as well as the notion of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is concerned with cultivating an awareness of where we are along the spectrum of Discernment/Openness. Mindfulness is about bringing to consciousness all the framing devices that constitute our capacity to discern. Once brought to awareness, we can make a conscious choice to alter these frames. Mindfulness represents the capacity to perceive and change our mental models.

The task of the mindful leader is to (a) question her own version of reality (acknowledging that it is only that—a version, a map, an approximation), (b) consider the potential outcomes of her decisions (not assuming that the intended, or hoped for, outcome is inevitable), and (c) realize the role that mental models play in the perception and interpretation of reality (Werhane, 1999). Mindfulness must come from a state that somehow transcends our mental models, a state more akin to pure consciousness.

Envisioning. As I worked with my eight-attribute model, I realized that something was missing between mindfulness and action. Before we take action we need to have a sense of where the action is supposed to take us. This is true whether we see the purpose of the journey to be a destination or the journey itself. Sensecrafting is about

creating meaning that takes us forward into the future. As such, it has become clear to me that my definition of deliberate sensemaking would need to include something about envisioning this way forward.

As a leader engages in deliberate sensemaking, it is important to identify a forward trajectory that will guide action. Destination is important in sensecrafting, but perhaps more important is the journey itself. As the leader remains alert to the other attributes of sensecrafting (particularly openness and mindfulness), she is likely to find that course correction is required to achieve a destination that might be different from what was originally defined but has now revealed itself as a more appropriate ambition for the organization.

A number of concepts will help the leader understand the complex task of envisioning:

1. While there is an imperative to be forward looking there is also difficulty in being able to pin a long-term destination that will persist as a worthy goal during the time it takes to reach that goal. Therefore, flexibility is required, along with sensitivity to incoming information that might call for adjustments.
2. In order to keep the meaning-making process collective, the leader must find ways to allow other individuals to participate. She must resist any temptation to unilaterally make sense for others and bestow it as given sense.
3. Finally, the leader must be realistic about her ability to accurately envision the future. Rather than specifying tight boundaries that rely on lofty assumptions about the leader's ability to understand the unfolding of future events and to control all of the variables that will influence future outcomes, the leader will need to embrace the ambiguity of allowing the future to emerge. Instead of directly controlling what emerges, she should direct her energies into creating the conditions that will help the organization shape the outcome even though not all of the forces that usher in the future state are known or controllable.

Imperative of looking forward. The importance of strategic planning and setting goals is a common prescription given to organizations. It seems self-evident that an organization, and the entities that make up organizations, including departments, small

teams and individuals, must have some sense of destination to orient their activities. Yet findings from the new sciences suggest that this task is more complicated than it may initially appear. Stacey (1992) argues that many organizations rely on assumptions of strong cause and effect relationships as an underpinning to their strategic plans. The problem is that even where cause and effect links exist, there are long time lags, as well as multiple variables involved. The assumption of a clear, short-term cause and effect relationship is an old map, according to Stacey. Stacey asserted, “It is becoming clearer why so many organizations die young. Recent studies increasingly make the point that managing by existing maps leads to imitation, repetition, and excess” (p. 9). Palus and Horth (2002) explained, “The old rules were about following maps. The new rules are about making the maps—and often the compasses as well,” (Chapter 2, Section 6, para. 1). So while looking forward to chart a course is still vital, the task may be much more difficult than previously assumed. The exercise is more about entering into uncharted territory with some sense of the ultimate destination, but no map to chart the way.

Participation. The sensecrafting leader accepts this challenge with a dose of humility, acknowledging that the challenge is so difficult that it is unlikely to be successfully answered from a single perspective. This is one reason that the sensecrafting leader embraces participation. He knows that the more perspectives brought to bear on the question of destination and the way forward, the more likely that the organization would find the optimal response.

Senge (1990) supported this perspective, arguing “. . . we must allow multiple visions to coexist, listening for the right course of action that transcends and unifies all our individual visions” (p. 218). Bill O’Brien, one of Senge’s case studies, helps to articulate why this is so: “Shared visions emerge from personal visions. This is how they

derive their energy and how they foster commitment. As O'Brien observes, 'My vision is not what's important to you. The only vision that motivates you is your vision'" (p. 211).

Wheatley (1999) further elaborates upon how participation creates ownership of the path and destination when people have a chance to participate in the destination planning:

Reality is co-created by our process of observation, from decisions we the observers make about what we the observers make about what we choose to notice. It does not exist independent of those activities. Therefore, we cannot talk people into our version of reality because truly nothing is real for them if they haven't created it. People can only experience a proposed plan by interacting with it, by evoking its possibilities through their personal processes of observation (p. 68-69).

Wheatley's (1999) perspective is informed by her acceptance of new science findings as being more than just metaphorical. Since, she argues, people create their reality through what they observe, it would follow that only people who have committed to a common future outcome would synchronize their actions towards its creation, and also be attendant to the variables that are likely to have influence on whether that outcome eventually manifests. When we have coherence of attention toward a common destination, it follows that we are more likely to get to that place. Another critical aspect is the necessity for flexibility, since the complexity of systems dynamics makes it virtually impossible to prescribe some ideal future while accounting for all the variables likely to arise between now and that desired future state.

Vision as strange attractor. Sometimes the leader's vision acts more like a strange attractor than the kind of carefully articulated mission and vision statements that appear on posters on the walls and websites of corporate America. The vision might be a guiding force that drives decisions and acts through gentle nudges, pushing the leader, and hence the organization, down a particular path. The leader might not be able to

articulate the vision, it might reside at a level of unconsciousness that precludes pithy vision statements, but its presence as an organizing force is vital nonetheless. In a beautiful description of the improvisational process employed by Duke Ellington, Weick (1993b) described how this kind of vision functions:

If Ellington was not a composer, what was he, as an enormous body of music would not exist today without him? The answer is that Ellington's influence was more diffuse. Musicians incorporated Ellington's sounds, ideas, and harmonies into their own thinking without being aware of doing so. Ellington in effect invented his musicians by shaping their improvising styles (e.g., encouraging the use of the plunger mute), choosing when they would play, and which of their strengths he would parade. His vision shaped the final products. (p. 325)

Duke Ellington's vision served as a strange attractor.

Emergence. Rather than specifying the kind of vision that is advocated in corporate long-term planning, writers who explore the implications of the new sciences emphasize the importance of creating the conditions for emergence of the vision and final destination. Implicit is a faith in the bounded chaos defined by strange attractors. These writers are not suggesting anarchy where no order prevails, but rather the controlled disorder described by chaos, where the apparent disorder exists inside a larger, bounded pattern. Wheatley (1999) explained the extraordinary qualities of chaos:

Chaos has always partnered with order—a concept that contradicts our common definition of chaos—but until we could see it with computers, we saw only turbulence, energy without predictable form. Chaos is the last state before a system plunges into random behavior where no order exists . . . However, in the realm of chaos, where everything should fall apart, the strange attractor emerges, and we observe order, not chaos. (p. 117)

The sensecrafting leader must develop the courage to operate within this ambiguous environment. He must have faith in the process and in emergence. According to Schwandt (2005), such a leader must:

develop the ability to foresee by making sense of emerging futures rather than just re-interpreting past experiences. Some may refer to this as visioning—or, as

Scharmer (2007) put it, learning from the future as it emerges, or “presencing.” (p. 188)

Patience and courage are required in this endeavor.

Action. The final pairing in my model of deliberate sensemaking is Action/Reflection. There is something somewhat paradoxical in Weick’s (1995) conception of action and enactment, a blurry line existing between action and planning. Planning is an abstract activity where we only guess at what characteristics will be emergent moment to moment. On the basis of these guesses, we predefine actions. However, once we are in a state of action, we tend to update our plans as we learn from our actions and as our actions shape what is unfolding. Surprises, new information, and unintended consequences call for unplanned actions. An individual who possesses the previously discussed traits (a learning intention, tolerance for ambiguity, discernment, openness, mindfulness, and envisioning) will have the flexibility to make adjustments to the plan, or depart from it all together, as new information arises. A stubborn individual not interested in learning, paralyzed by ambiguity, un-discerning, closed, unfocused and mindless, might cling rigidly to a failed plan, unable to accept the disconfirming information that suggests that the plan be revisited. Although she may be laser focused on her original plan, she is failing to expand her focus to include important things that might be occurring on the periphery, outside of her awareness. If the other conditions of conscious sensecrafting are not present, action can exacerbate a bad situation.

Action has at least three critical components: the context within which we act, the action itself, and the consequences of our action. Weick (1995) emphasizes a curious feature about sensemaking: the process is more oriented toward plausibility than accuracy. A major consideration here is that the context is dynamic. Delaying action

could mean that the action we planned and the environment that we acted in are no longer a match. Thus, Weick discussed about the benefits of bold action:

Bold action is adaptive because its opposite, deliberation, is futile in a changing world where perceptions, by definition, can never be accurate. They can never be accurate because, by the time people notice and name something, it has become something else and no longer exists. (p. 60)

Complicating things even more, the environment changes as the result of our action.

If we are to engage in conscious sensemaking, then we need to remain mindful of the way that our actions affect the reality that we perceive. For example, we could act under a given set of assumptions, but as we consider the results of our action, we need to be alert to the potential for self-fulfillment to occur.

Reflection. Once we have acted, the final aspect of conscious sensemaking can come into play: reflection. In reflection, we look back upon our actions, see the new world that has been created by the addition of our action, and reconsider what all of this tells us about our mental models. Do we glean information that suggests the need to revise our assumptions or beliefs? In rare cases, we may even find that our experiences have caused a shift in our values. This process naturally happens in an unconscious manner, but to engage in deliberate sensemaking, we must slow down the process of reflection.

One example of an institutionalized version of such reflection is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission was established in South Africa to make sense of what occurred under apartheid (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2001). An excerpt from the forward of the Commission's Report, written by Bishop Desmond Tutu, explained the Commission's perspective on reflection:

The other reason amnesia simply will not do is that the past refuses to lie down quietly. It has an uncanny habit of returning to haunt one. "Those who forget the

past are doomed to repeat it” are the words emblazoned at the entrance to the museum in the former concentration camp of Dachau. They are words we would do well to keep ever in mind. However painful the experience, the wounds of the past must not be allowed to fester. They must be opened. They must be cleansed. And balm must be poured on them so they can heal. This is not to be obsessed with the past. It is to take care that the past is properly dealt with for the sake of the future. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998, p. 7)

Sensemaking is concerned with how people come to understand events. While sensemaking is typically an unconscious process, I have described the qualities of what I term deliberate sensemaking. These are the possession of a learning intention, a tolerance for ambiguity, a keen skill for discernment, openness, a sensitivity to issues of framing, mindfulness, envisioning, taking action, and engaging in reflection. The preceding discussion of sensemaking and the attributes of deliberate sensemaking provide critical grounding for understanding my concept of sensecrafting, or collective, conscious sensemaking. Leadership is another crucial component of sensecrafting, and our investigation now turns to the literature on leadership.

Sensemaking and Leadership

If reality is a construction and humans are primarily concerned with meaning-making, then an essential task of leadership must be rooted in sensemaking. This is a stance adopted by Smircich and Morgan (1982) in their article *Leadership: The Management of Meaning*. Smircich and Morgan claimed, “leaders draw their power from their ability to define the reality of others” (p. 259). The presence of leadership necessarily suggests the presence of followership. The flip side of sensemaking is sensegiving, which is the task that the leader performs when she defines reality for others.

Drath and Palus (1994) share the constructivist perspective that leadership is the craft of meaning making.

Authority is a tool for making sense of things (making meaning) but so are other human tools such as norms, values, work systems, and goal-path structures. Leadership, on the other hand, is understood here as the process through which people put these tools to work to create meaning. (p. 6)

Weick et al. (2005) see leadership as shaping the seven properties of sensemaking (social relations, ongoing, identity, retrospect, sensitivity to cues, enactment and plausibility). The construction of meaning is critical to leadership because it allows action to unfold. For the made-sense to be successful, a key criterion is the sustainability that it creates:

When people then ask ‘now what should I do?’ this added question has the force of bringing meaning into existence, meaning that they hope is stable enough for them to act into the future, continue to act, and to have the sense that they remain in touch with the continuing flow of experience. (Weick et al., 2005, p. 2)

As Weick (1995) tells us, the plausibility of the made-sense is not relevant. What is key, however, is that the made sense provides a platform stable enough to promote action. Then, through enactment, actors bring the world into existence through the iterative process described in Figure 1 (see page 46).

When people engage in sensemaking they are not seeking some objective reality. Rather, the goal is to arrive at an understanding of the situation that allows the individual to continue to act and to believe that his actions are relevant to the context, as he understands it. This is what Weick (1995) means when he refers to the sensemaking property of plausibility. Made-sense does not need to be correct, just useful. Weick (2001) provides cartography as a helpful analogy: while an “indefinite number of plausible maps . . . can be constructed” (p. 9) the value of each map is determined by whether or not it allows the user to get from Point A to Point B. The details that the cartographer can choose to represent or not lead to an infinite number of different depictions of the territory that could qualify as a serviceable map.

Thayer's (1988) concept of leadership weaves together sensemaking, sensegiving and storytelling. Thayer stated, "A *leader* is one who creates human/social alternatives by telling a compelling story about what is, about what will be, about what should be or about what should (or could) be done about one or the other" (p. 260). When a leader provides made-sense to his followers, and the followers accept it, this is termed sensegiving. Sensegiving contrasts with my concept of sensecrafting in that in sensegiving the leader provides the made-sense whereas in sensecrafting the sense is a co-creation. Below, I explore the literature on sensegiving in more detail.

Sensegiving. The term *sensegiving* first appeared as a brief mention in Whetten (1984), who used it in the context of a leader imparting a vision (Smerek, 2009). The term gained traction in Gioia and Chittipeddi's (1991) exploration of strategic change initiation. Gioia and Chittipeddi found that sensemaking and sensegiving are helpful concepts for understanding the process that leaders engage in when managing change. Furthermore, they noted, sensemaking has a reciprocal relationship with sensegiving. Hill and Levenhagen (1995) found sensemaking was a critical skill for entrepreneurs to use in navigating the ambiguity of their environments. Entrepreneurs also required the skill of sensegiving in order to gain the necessary support for their ventures. Weick et al. (2005) revisited and updated the topic of sensemaking, remarking, "We . . . restate sensemaking in ways that make it . . . more infused . . . with issues of sensegiving and persuasion" (p. 409). Maitlis and Lawrence's (2007) longitudinal study identified the triggers and enablers of sensegiving in organizations, finding the prime triggers to be associated with gaps in organizational sensemaking and the key enablers to be the discursive skills of leaders.

Sensegiving has been found to influence others' sensemaking (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991), perceptions and interpretations (Czarniawska, 2003; Maitlis, 2005) and changes how people think (Smerek, 2009). Conditions for successful sensegiving include that the sense-given must be sensible to those being led (Smircich & Morgan, 1982) and that the leader must have discursive ability (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007; Smerek, 2009). The need for sensegiving appears in complex environments (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007) and where there is a need for new meaning (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991).

Whereas sensegiving is an activity that requires followers, sensecrafting requires participants. Furthermore, in sensecrafting, there is no dichotomy between participant and leader. In fact, any participant could potentially play a leadership role within sensecrafting, for sensecrafting is about creating conditions and facilitating processes by which the collective engages in sensemaking in a participatory fashion. To further understand this concept, next we will explore the nature of participative leadership.

Participative leadership. The pioneer of participative management was Kurt Lewin. "Lewin wed scientific thinking to democratic values and gave birth to participative management. His twin emphases on science and democracy form the philosophical base for participative work design and reorganization" (Weisbord, 1987, p. 72). It was Lewin's passion for experimentation, to learn by doing, that led him to his perspectives on participative management. While he held democratic ideals as a value, his understanding of the importance of participation was born of experience. He and his students validated through experimentation that democratic styles of leadership lead to productivity and satisfaction (Weisbord, 1987). He also discovered that more enduring change could be achieved by including key constituents, gatekeepers, in problem solving and solution development. As Margaret Mead (1983) put it, "Kurt [Lewin]'s special gift

for understanding American ideals of democracy . . . led him to include in these first research plans his clear recognition that you cannot do things to people but only with them” (p. 164).

Influenced by Lewin, MacGregor (2000) argued participative styles of management, to be effective, had to be coupled with what he called Theory Y assumptions about managing people. Some key elements of Theory Y are that management is responsible for organizing the means of production for economic ends and that people are not naturally passive or resistant to change. Additionally, Theory Y holds that intrinsic in all people are “the motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, the readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals” (p. 140). It is incumbent upon management to help people realize and act upon these capacities. Moreover, MacGregor asserted that “the essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions . . . so that people can achieve their own goals *best* by directing *their own* efforts” (p. 140).

In his discussion of leadership typologies, Schein (1992) also emphasized the importance of underlying assumptions. Schein presented six typologies based on authority and participation: autocratic, paternalistic, consultative or democratic, participative and power sharing, delegative, and abdicative. He added that “these organizational typologies deal much more with aggression, power, and control than with love, intimacy, and peer relationships” (p. 135). In fact, by engaging in a contemplation of power sharing, Schein reveals his own underlying assumption that power is akin to a possession of those who hold it; power holders get to decide what to do with the power. While Schein calls attention to the importance of assumptions, he also pointed out that identifying the *best* organizational form is always highly context dependent.

Taking a more generous approach with power, Blanchard (2007) adopted the term *servant leadership* from Greenleaf (1998). In Blanchard's conception, the leader remains responsible for defining vision, but when it comes to implementation, the model becomes more participative. "Servant leaders . . . feel their role is to help people achieve their goals. They constantly try to find out what their people need to perform well and live according to the vision" (Blanchard, Blanchard, & Zigarmi, 2007, p. 250). Schein (1992) lamented that leadership typologies lack love, intimacy and relationship; Blanchard et al. (2007) emphasized that one of the distinctive traits of a servant leadership is heart. A genuine servant leader must be someone who desires to serve. Leaders who claim no ownership over resources exemplify this attitude: "Since called leaders don't own anything, they figure their role in life is to shepherd everybody and everything that comes their way" (p. 260).

Many contemporary organizational theorists have coupled their understanding of participative leadership with what they see as imperatives for new forms of leadership brought on by our increasingly complex world. Bennet and Bennet (2004), for example, called for successful organizations to become Intelligent Complex Adaptive Systems. Leaders within such organizations will not just be those at the top of the hierarchy. Rather, they argue, leadership must be distributed throughout the organization. Such leaders will be defined by their behavior, not by their position.

The work of the collaborative leader is to create, maintain, and nurture . . . They will . . . leverage knowledge . . . Interpret and explained the environment . . . Their main work, however, will be to set an example, inspire and energize the workforce, and above all to create more collaborative leaders who can create more collaborative leaders. (Chapter 9, para. 5-6)

In addition to these traits, Bennet and Bennet (2004) emphasized that the leader in an Intelligent Complex Adaptive System will be a facilitator and a collaborator.

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) drew on similar themes, also advocating for distributed leadership in order to access the collective intelligence. Senge (1990) emphasized the criticality of collective intelligence; it is only through our tapping into the multiple perspectives and experiences of the group that we can solve our most intractable problems. Participative leadership is an imperative for a world that has been illuminated by the new sciences and that is being redefined commercially and socially by the World Wide Web. As Wheatley (1999) summarized:

Our zeitgeist is a new (and ancient) awareness that we participate in a world of exquisite interconnectedness. We can now see the webs of interconnections that weave the world together; we are more aware that we live in relationship, connected to everything else. (p. 158)

Understanding participative leadership, particularly distributed leadership, wherein the nexus of leadership is not defined by an organizational chart but by the behaviors of individuals residing anywhere within the organization, is a key to understanding sensecrafting. Sensecrafting is a participative form of leadership that explicitly takes advantage of the multiple perspectives gleaned from individuals throughout the organization. Sensecrafting is about organizing these multiple perspectives into meanings that galvanize the organization into action.

In this section, I have explored leadership, particularly as it relates to sensemaking and sensegiving. To help ground sensecrafting, this investigation has also examined participatory forms of leadership, which links to the collective aspect of sensecrafting. Since sensecrafting leaders are concerned with meaning and its creation and management, another important thread in the tapestry will be narrative and how narrative techniques have been used to understand organizations.

Narrative

In this section I will examine narrative and its links to sensemaking and the study of organizations. I will begin the section with a consideration of narrative analysis and how these techniques have been applied to organizations. Next I will look at story and sensemaking. I will close the section with a consideration of how leaders make use of story.

Narrative analysis. Given the close relationship between sensemaking and story, it is no surprise that many sensemaking studies use methodologies that involve narrative techniques. Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991), for example, employed an interpretative perspective and ethnographic approach in their study of the sensemaking and sensegiving activities of a newly appointed university president. Corvellec (2006) demonstrated the links between sensemaking and narrative in his article that makes an in-depth exploration of an 87-word news item.

Organizational studies embraced narrative analysis as an appropriate method for research belatedly (Gabriel, 2004). Beyond the case study method, so popular in many business schools, the use of story to understand organizations in a disciplined way is a more recent development. The arrival of narrative analysis as a legitimate form of organizational study has been made possible by a shift in mindset:

Long tarnished as mere hearsay, opinion, or invention, stories, with all their inaccuracies, exaggerations, omissions, and liberties, are now seen as *providing vital clues not into what happened, but what people experience, or even into what they want to believe as having actually happened* [italics added]. (Introduction, para. 2)

By articulating these *vital clues* that go beyond the rote facts of events, stories possess the possibility of accessing a truth deeper than the truth contained in ‘just the facts’. By including the perspective of what people experienced—what they believed

happened—we enter into the realm of meaning. Here, it does not matter so much what really happened, but the meaning that the participants took from those happenings and how they were shaped and affected by events.

According to Czarniawska (1998), narrative appears in organizational research in at least five forms: research that is written in a narrative style; research that consists of collections of stories; interpretative approaches that “conceptualize organizational life as story making and organization theory as story reading” (pp. 13-14); literary critique; and research as sensemaking. Czarniawska (1997) explained the appropriateness of narrative analysis for studying organizations:

Practitioners and consultants are busy writing texts and authoring works. The researchers’ role is to interpret these texts (although this requires the creation of yet another text). They build worlds; we inspect the construction (although this requires the construction of yet another world). (p. 204)

In organizational studies, there is some debate about the appropriate use of terms such as *story* and *narrative*. Boje (2001) drew sharp distinctions between these terms, and even advances a third term to describe narrative forms: *antenarrative*. Others use the terms *story* and *narrative* interchangeably (Gabriel, 2004). According to Boje (2001), *story* is a chronological accounting of events. *Narrative* is different in that it adds a sense of coherence or plot. With story, the focus is on a linear sequence, but these events, as they unfold, do not necessarily constitute a cohesive whole; it is only in retrospect, when events are recounted as narrative that the cohesion of plot is layered onto the events. Conversely, Czarniawska (2004) characterizes *story* as emplotted narrative. Boje (2001), quoting Weick (1995), describes *narrative* thusly: “When people punctuate their own living into stories, they impose a formal coherence on what is otherwise a flowing soup” (p. 128). Dunford and Jones (2000) characterize *narrative* as “language used to connect

events in time” (p. 1). Boje (2001) proposes the term *antenarrative* to capture the essence of story before (ante) the imposition of narrative. Boje’s precision drew important attention to the distinction between reality as it unfolds (story) and our memory of the unfolded reality (narrative). For the purpose of this paper, I will use Gabriel’s (2004) definitions: “. . . stories are particular types of narratives and . . . narratives are particular types of texts . . . What makes narratives different from other texts is a clear time sequence and what makes stories different from other narratives is plot,” (Introduction, para. 5, fn 1).

Boje’s (2001) term *antenarrative* deserves further exploration, for it will ground our forthcoming exploration of organizations as competing stories. First, it is important to remind the reader that Boje conceived of *narrative* as a more sophisticated evolution of story: *story* is the more primal form, before coherence has been layered in. *Narrative*, according to Boje, is the result of story that has undergone a process of emplotment. In my own terminology, I am reversing the terms. According to Boje: “Narrative requires plot, as well as coherence. . . Story is folksy, without emplotment, a simple telling of chronology. I propose ‘antenarrative.’ Antenarrative is the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet” (p. 1).

Antenarrative analysis, then, draws our attention to the way in which “theory supplements, frames and imposes onto story” (p. 3). Boje further explicated, “Narrative theory is an experience of the after-effects of storytelling once coherence is rendered, while antenarrative is an experience of the storytelling life with abbreviated and interrupted story performances that yield plurivocality” (p. 4). In my research, I am interested in capturing antenarratives in the sense that they are stories in progress; story fragments that possess, perhaps, no end; story fragments that are not a part of the

dominant storyline; and story fragments that represent an alternate voice, trying not to be overwhelmed by the hegemony of the organization's preferred storyline.

It seems to me that a would-be-leader must either adopt the dominant storyline, or find enough co-travelers who will embrace the nascent leader's storyline; one of those two conditions must be met for one to be a leader.

Antenarrative has significant ties to notions of power and hegemony.

Antenarrative encompasses the realm of minority narratives that have not been embraced into the larger, consensual version of "what is happening here." Hegemony defines what narratives take on this privileged position and who gets to author them. As Boje (2001) explained:

It is only in teasing out what is the dominant grand narrative that more local (antenarrative) stories become noticeable. In the interplay between grand and local narrative we can begin to recognize hegemony and posit the dynamics of the relationship. . . . By hegemony, I mean how one voice is privileged in the intertextual dialogue in ways that are taken-for-granted or too subtle to be acknowledged. (p. 35)

The ideas of hegemony and power will be explored further below when we consider how organizations are webs of competing stories. Next our exploration turns to the links between story and sensemaking. We begin that investigation with some grounding in the elements that make up story.

Story and sensemaking. McAdams (1993) delineated the elements of story as being: story grammar; setting; characters; and aspects of plot; including initiating event; attempt, or "the effort to attain a certain goal" (p. 25); consequence; reaction; and denouement. According to Bruner (1986), the important elements of story include plight, character and consciousness; what is significant about a given story is the way that these elements are integrated. Bruner asserted:

What gives the story its unity is the manner in which plight, characters, and consciousness interact to yield a structure that has a start, a development, and a “sense of ending.” What one seeks in story structure is precisely how plight, character, and consciousness are integrated. (p. 21)

These elements of story coalesce to create meaning. According to Gabriel (2004), “Stories set agendas, express emotions, and fashion ways of thinking” (Introduction, para. 5). Pink (2005) claimed that stories provide “context enriched by emotion, a deeper understanding of how we fit in and why that matters” (Chapter 5, para. 47).

Storytelling and sensemaking are intimately related:

[A] good story [is] . . . something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something which resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively, but also can be used prospectively; something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story. (Weick, 1995, pp. 60–61)

Here, Weick (1995) reveals that sensemaking is none other than the story we tell ourselves about the events unfolding in our lives. As sensecrafting is a collective form that combines sensemaking and sensegiving into one simultaneous undertaking, sensecrafting then is also at its root a storytelling activity.

Previously we explored the role that mental models play in forming our perceptions of the world. Polkinghorne (1988) argues that a key organizing mechanism that humans use is narrative: “Narrative is one of the cognitive schemes; it presents to awareness a world in which timely human actions are linked together according to their effect on the attainment of human desires and goals” (p. 16).

Weick (2004) drew connections between sensemaking and story when he discusses how meaning can be restored when sensemaking falls apart: “If a project begins to make less and less sense,” what is needed are “efforts to enrich a story of what the

person is up to by connecting the subthemes and strengthening the plot line” (p. 9). In fact, Weick et al. (2005) conceived of sensemaking as the continued redrafting of story. Story can be thought of the outcome of sensemaking, a form of reified sensemaking: it is the way that we put together our sense in a form that can be easily remembered and conveyed to others.

This drive for sensemaking is elemental because of our basic human desire for meaning. Simmons (2007) asserted, “Meaning is more powerful than facts” (Chapter 1, para. 27). Meaning, in turn gives rise to action. Referring back to Figure 1 (see page 46), the way that we interpret events has implications for what we choose to do about those events. Simmons (2007) described this phenomenon in story terms: “Actions result from the stories people tell themselves about what objective facts mean to them” (Chapter 1, para. 27). Polkinghorne (1988) likewise described the dynamics of narrative as a meaning-making system. Narrative is a cognitive scheme that emphasizes linear, cause-effect paradigm:

Narrative ordering makes individual events comprehensible by identifying the whole to which they contribute. The ordering process operates by linking diverse happenings along a temporal dimension and by identifying the effect one event has on another, and it serves to cohere human actions and the events that affect human life into a temporal gestalt. (p. 18)

Storytelling is a pervasive element in human being, so much so, that Snowden (2008) referred to humans as *homo narrans*. Writers have conceived individual sensemaking as the stories we tell ourselves (e.g., McAdams, 1993). The stories that we tell ourselves will determine how we feel about events in our lives:

Virginia Satir . . . stated near the end of her life, “Life is not the way it’s supposed to be. It’s the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference.” Our findings underscore the belief that it is people’s interpretations of potential stressors, rather than the events themselves, that determine whether they become “distressors.” (Schafer & Toy, 1999, p. 34)

Pink (2005) similarly asserted, “we are each the authors of our own lives” (Chapter 5, para. 38). This brings an important linkage to the element of authorship: the idea of authoring one’s life. This seems to me a natural extension of constructivism especially as Baxter Magolda (2004) conceives it. If we agree that we create our reality, then we must also see ourselves as the authors of our lives. It would then follow that if we don’t like our circumstances, the cure would be to write a new story, or at least revise the plot.

Narrative therapy is rooted in the idea that therapists can work with the stories we tell ourselves to evoke healing. “The development of a coherent life story is a major goal in these therapies. The analyst and the client seek to construct more adequate and vitalizing stories about the self” (McAdams, 1993, p. 33). Psychologists employing Transactional Analysis work with the concept of life scripts (Berne, 1964). As Polkinghorne (1988) explained, “Two people can, by incorporating the same kind of life events into different types of stories, change the meaning of these events. Psychotherapists have used this property of narrative in their notion of ‘life-scripts’” (p. 20). Erikson (1962/1993) wrote that by “selectively reconstruct[ing] [our] past We maneuver ourselves into the inner position of proprietors, of creators” (p. 112).

Story and leadership. We have briefly examined how narrative analysis has been employed in studies of organizations. Furthermore, we have seen the intimate connections between meaning, sensemaking and storytelling. It follows that story has a role within organizations and that leaders must find a special relationship with story in order to effectively organize the activities and aspirations of their followers. To complete our exploration of narrative, we will now delve into two areas: how leaders make use of stories and an examination of how organizations can be conceived as a constellation of

competing stories. Both of these topics are tied with notions of power, who has the right to author, which stories are privileged and which are suppressed.

Thayer (1988) characterizes the way that leaders work with story as a process of enchantment. This process would seem to involve the leader making sense of her world through story and then coming to see that story as the dominant metaphor for understanding her world. Finally, she engages in an act of leadership by enrolling others into her story; if they accept the story, they become her followers, and just as the leader is enchanted by the story, so are the followers:

A leader is a person who enchants him or herself . . . with the story he or she tells. . . . In its telling, others may become enchanted with it. The more people who become enchanted with it, the more “truthful” and “right” it appears to be, both to the leader and to his or her “followers.” It may then become institutionalized, and become a part of the way the world “is,” the way the world is known, for future generations. We are first “led” by the ways the world might be, and then by the way the world “is.” A leader revitalizes or changes our ways of “minding” the world. (p. 260)

Sensegiving is the term used to describe the process of a leader passing along his made-sense to followers. Huzzard (2004) characterizes this process as “filtering preferred readings” (p. 9). He connects sensegiving activities with power dynamics. Tichy (1997) argues that one can distinguish between leaders and managers through the kinds of questions their stories address. Leadership stories are concerned with answering three fundamental questions: Who am I? Who are we? and Where are we going? Management stories, on the other hand, focus on What happened? and How can we fix it? Tichy (1997) conceives leadership as more forward looking, more concerned with identity, while management is backward looking. This would suggest that there is a corollary between leadership and deliberate sensemaking while management is more evocative of unconscious sensemaking.

Another lens for considering the relationship between leadership and story is to examine the word *authority*. If we think of an authority as being one who has the power to author, we draw strong ties between power and the management of meaning. Boje (2001), Czarniawska (1998), and Simmons (2007) all make reference to this notion of authority. Vickers' (2008) statement is illustrative: "Narrative as political praxis is concerned with the unequal distribution of rights to storytelling. Who can speak, who cannot and which stories are allowed to form the hegemonic narrative in the organization" (p. 562).

Of course, anyone within an organization can construct their own story, but what is critical is whether their story coheres with the stories that prevail in the organization or whether the story is sufficiently compelling to gain a following that has enough power to keep the story alive. Without one of these qualities, the story possesses no authority to interpret reality on a broad-scale, and the individual author is at risk of committing to a version of reality at odds with what is the accepted reality of the organization. The individual who does that might be seen as someone who is not with the program; who does not fit in; or, as one organization would characterize it, someone who has not drunk the Kool-Aid.

Organizations as competing stories. Boje (2001) offered criticism about the failure in organizational studies to consider the plurality of stories that make up organizations. Boje's own work emphasized the presence of narratives and antenarratives that make up organizational existence. He drew attention to the alternative narratives, the minority voices that are often drowned out by the more powerful, dominant story lines of an organization. In describing his own work, Boje stated:

My goal is to embrace narrative analysis alternatives that would tell organization stories differently, that would resituate narrative analysis to rebalance the hierarchical domination of narrative over story. It is not to abandon narrative analysis, but to look at how to analyse fragmented and almost living stories (TwoTrees, 1997), which are to me the currency of organizational communication. (p. 17)

Boje (1995) used a boundary-breaking play, *Tamara*, as a metaphor for his conception of organizations as a plurality of voices. *Tamara* is an unusual production that is staged throughout the rooms and hallways of a large house. The play is interactive in that audience members choose which characters to follow as the characters disperse throughout the house. Scenes unfold simultaneously in different rooms. Each audience member has awareness of only the scenes that she has witnessed. Much like in real-life, the audience remains ignorant of what is transpiring in other parts of the house where they are not present. But unlike real-life, audience members are not restricted to the viewpoint of a particular character. They may choose to change the character that they follow, which gives the audience access to other parts of the story.

Comparing organizations to the experience of *Tamara*, Boje (1995) elaborated:

Organizations cannot be registered as one story, but instead are a multiplicity, a plurality of stories and story interpretations in struggle with one another. People wander the halls and offices of organizations, simultaneously chasing story lines—and that is the “work” of contemporary organizations. More important, organizational life is more indeterminate, more differentiated, more chaotic, than it is simple, systematic, monological, and hierarchical. (p. 4)

Weick (2001) shared Boje’s perspective of organizations as being composed of a multiplicity of stories: “Organizations resemble puzzling terrain because they lend themselves to multiple conflicting interpretations, all of which are plausible” (p. 9). Both Czarniawska (2004) and Huzzard (2004) described the socialization of meaning-systems. In organizations, individuals become inculcated within particular systems of meaning which effect how they interpret events, the stories they are telling themselves, and their

role in those stories. Huzzard outlined a perspective that “sees organisations as arenas of domination whereby the powerful are in control of socialisation processes and political agendas. Those in dominant positions wield power through shaping common ideologies, common definitions of issues and common beliefs” (p. 6).

Smircich and Morgan (1982) tightly linked the concept of competing stories to organization itself. If there is a strong presence of competing stories, none of which has prevailed, organization itself is at risk:

If a group situation embodies competing definitions of reality, strongly held, no clear pattern of leadership evolves. Often, such situations are characterized by struggles among those who aspire to define the situation. Such groups remain loosely coupled networks of interaction, with members often feeling that they are ‘disorganized’ because they do not share a common way of making sense of their experience. (p. 258)

According to Thayer (1988), competing stories derive conflict not from things themselves, but from the way we interpret them. As Thayer pointed out, the chieftain in Saint-Exupery’s *The Citadel* (1948) is an example of exemplary leadership. The chieftain stated, “You enter into communication not with things, . . . but with the knots binding them together” (p. 198). Thayer (1988) commented on this example by saying “The ‘knots’ binding them together are what comprise the minds of leader and follower alike” (p. 258). Our interpretations of events are represented by the way they have been tied together by the knots of our minds. It is not so much the events themselves that are questioned, but the meaning attributed to those events and the way the events are connected to each other.

Louis (1983) speaks about the navigation of differing meanings in organizations as a negotiation. “Meaning is essentially and endlessly negotiated by social system members. . . . In [one] sense of negotiated, it represents bargaining among alternative

meanings differentially preferred by the various parties to an interaction” (p. 44).

Czarniawska (2004) agreed with Louis (1983) about the importance of negotiation in establishing organizational meaning. In discussing ways of interpreting the fiasco that occurred at Enron, Czarniawska (2004) stated, “One or many alternative narratives are always in the offing. . . . There is no way of deciding between different stories except by negotiation” (p. 209).

Negotiation can occur retrospectively. Weick (2001) pointed out how retrospect is one of the key properties of sensemaking. Here, he explained how retrospect can work in the stories that organizations tell themselves: “Many justifications are not fully formed immediately after commitment occurs. Instead, they are worked out over time as the implications of the action are gradually discovered and new meanings of the action are created” (p. 23). This explained how revisionist history can arise. One explanation of history dominates until implications become clear and then an alternate explanation prevails, one that incorporates those implications but still coheres with the dominant narrative.

Weick (1995) further explored the nature of our memories and the stories that we tell ourselves about the past. Weick pointed out that in retrospect, people recall “a complex prior history of tangled, indeterminate events. . . as being much more determinant, leading ‘inevitably’ to the outcome they already knew” (p. 28). Consistent with Starbuck and Milliken (1988), Weick (1995) further agreed that history will be reconstructed in a manner consistent with whether the outcomes were deemed to be good or bad, such that “if the outcome is perceived to be bad, then antecedents are reconstructed to emphasize incorrect actions, flawed analyses, and inaccurate

perceptions, even if such flaws were not influential or all that obvious at the time” (p. 28).

Boje (2001) refers to revisionist history as “rearticulat[ing] meaning in embedded acts of retrospective sensemaking” (p. 78). Gioia et al. (2002) also discuss the malleability of history, pointing out that history is “. . . subtly but significantly open to revisions that make it conform to current needs and perceptions” (p. 622). Polkinghorne (1988) also commented on this phenomenon, stating, “narrative can retrospectively alter the meaning of events after the final outcome is known” (p. 18).

The malleability of history becomes even more complex in organizations when one considers that different parties might possess various motives for espousing their own versions of history. Taking credit for a success or deferring blame for failures are two well-known motivators. Different versions of history might arise due to intentional efforts to craft a favorable story, or may be the result of unconscious processes. The mental models of individuals will play a significant role in how they interpret events and how those events led to some outcome. As Smircich and Morgan (1982) explained, the existence of differing mental models can account for what they term *counter-realities* (or what Thayer [1988] called *alternities*). “Different members may make sense of situations with the aid of different interpretive schemes, establishing ‘counter-realities,’ a source of tension in the group situation that may set the basis for change of an innovative or disintegrative kind” (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 262).

Writers who engage in narrative analysis conceive power as stemming from the ability to control the story. According to Weick et al. (2005):

power is expressed in acts that shape what people accept, take for granted, and reject (Pfeffer, 1981). [Shaping occurs] through things like control over . . . who

talks to whom . . . criteria for plausible stories . . . and histories and retrospect that are singled out. (p. 418)

Czarniawska (2004) characterizes authoring as a primary quality of power, describing one act of power as when an individual “concoct[s] narratives for others without including them in a conversation” (p. 142). For Simmons (2007), the power of authoring derives from its effect on peoples’ mental models:

Likewise when you tell a story that both draws attention and is often retold within a group, you in effect control future feelings and filters about that subject. If you control the feelings and filters of enough people you can alter their conclusions about reality. (Chapter 1, para. 10)

For Boje (1995), the task of leadership becomes about managing story itself, not just authoring. “Because of the opportunity for multiple interpretation,” Boje explained, “much of management is about judging stories and storytellers and capturing story characters in a panoptic, interconnected network of interpretative-disciplinary relationships” (p. 4).

Boje (2001) suggests that the hegemony of authorship present in organizations can be challenged by giving voice to alternative stories. As he explained, this can occur through “resituating” grand narrative, where grand narrative refers to the overarching story that prevails in an organization, representing the dominant perspective of those in power.

At the macrostory level, each big story is one consensus, one totalizing account, one set of universals, one set of essential foundations and one construction. One side of a story masks other sides, and without context, we can miss what is between the lines of a story. To analyse, resituate and restory grand narratives, then, is to let a thousand stories bloom rather than dismiss certain stories as unworthy. (p. 44)

The struggle for authorship in organizations helps explained how organizations can be seen as webs of competing stories. As Eisenberg and Goodall (1993) described it,

“an organizational culture is necessarily a conflicted environment, a site of multiple meanings engaged in a constant struggle for interpretive control” (p. 137). When leaders become aware of these drives within organizations, they can become more attendant to the flow of counter-stories that go against the prevalent grand narrative. Such awareness can help leaders to understand more fully all of the perspectives at play in the organization and to develop a richer appreciation of the diversity of the organization.

In this section, I have explored a) the literature on narrative as it relates to the study of organizations through narrative analysis, b) story as it relates to sensemaking, c) leadership, and finally d) how organizations may be viewed as webs of competing stories. In the next section I will further delve into the craft of storytelling.

Storytelling and the Elements of Story

This discussion will lay a foundation for how a sensecrafting leader can facilitate collective sensemaking by cultivating storytelling skills. Writers from diverse fields such as sociology, psychology and organization studies have claimed that humans are storytellers by nature (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1993; Snowden, 2008). The hypothesis holds that story is the primary means through which humans organize their world (Klein, 1999). A sensecrafting leader, then, must be adept at the art of storytelling, having an intuitive understanding of its elements and an innate command of its workings.

Authoring. The story of our made-sense exists at multiple levels. First of all, it is present in our very experience of life itself. This perspective follows a constructivist view point that asserts that that which we experience as *the world* is in fact a construction; the world experienced by a collective is a social construction, consisting not of objective facts that exist beyond the perception of individuals, but rather composed of choices and bestowed meanings (Bruner, 1986). The world we experience is one story. This first

story, however, might not have a reified existence. For example, it might not be thought of as *a story* by its authors. While we live the story, the *realization* that we live a story might remain below the threshold of awareness, in the tacit realm.

If we are able to articulate our story to others, then it must have a more explicit existence. This second story (the story we tell others) can become the object of our awareness. We can intentionally pass it along to others. When newcomers join our group, we can initiate them through telling the story of the group. We have an intuition that storytelling can help to orient the new person. We may remember our own experiences of entry, and how tools such as story facilitated our acclimation process. Likewise, we may offer our own stories to the newcomer to help him know the organization.

Bringing the stories that we tell ourselves from tacit to explicit represents one level of sophistication in authoring. The next level of sophistication is for the individual to develop the awareness that he is not a passive participant in the story, that he is in fact an author. For this person, the existence and persistence of the story is not mysterious. He sees his own role in creating and perpetuating the story. He realizes that he possesses the power, through his actions, to change the story. He sees himself as author.

Each person is an author of his own story. Each person can also be a consumer of the story generated by others. And each can be a character participating in the generation of a collective story. In fact, we probably play all three roles simultaneously, all the time. All these threads exist, and at any time, anyone of us can pick up the threads and become a weaver. Such stories might be highly personal, resonating only for the author, or they may be embraced as belonging to consensus reality.

The sensecrafting leader will exhibit awareness of these domains of authorship. She will realize the levels of awareness: (a) the story we tell ourselves about the reality

we create, (b) the stories we tell others about the story we are in, and (c) the knowing that we are the authors of our own story. She will also hold an awareness of how our individual stories are related to the collective, and will believe that anyone of us can participate in shaping the collective story.

The sensecrafting leader will use this knowing to encourage those around her to become more conscious of their own authorship. She will nurture a silence of our chattering minds, so that we may attend to the voices that are authoring our lives. The sensecrafting leader will help her colleagues to tune into their assumptions and mental models so that these individuals can begin to know how they create their reality and shape their stories. Likewise, the sensecrafting leader must apply these same insights to herself—she must have the courage to see her responsibility in the conflicts that she participated in creating.

Characters. While the sensegiving leader needs to understand his audience, the sensecrafting leader has a broader task. In sensegiving, the audience may be said to be the potential recipients of the given sense. In sensecrafting, there is no audience, per se, to receive a message. Instead there are participants who, together with the leader, co-create (or craft) sense. The sense (the outcome of the process) and the sensecrafting (the process itself) are not the exclusive domains of the leader; rather the leader facilitates the participants through the process, and what is created belongs to all who participated. We could think of the participants as *characters*. Just as the characters in a novel help to construct the story through their actions, the characters in sensecrafting help to create sense.

Wurman (2001) additionally provided helpful guidance to the sensecrafter in articulating considerations for information designers: “When you are designing

information for your target audience, remember they may have no access to the knowledge you take for granted” (p. 84). Indeed, much of the art of being a sensecrafting leader lies in cultivating an appreciation for that which is taken for granted. This tacit information, by definition, lies beneath the threshold of conscious awareness. Yet the tacit wields tremendous power in shaping the explicit. The sensecrafting leader must not only be adept at working with the tacit realm, but must also recognize the complexity that arises when we consider the conjunction between the tacit and the other.

Wurman (2001) counseled, “You have to hone your ability to understand what it’s like not to understand, which will allow you to communicate more clearly with your audiences, no matter who they are” (p. 84). The sensecrafting leader must do even more; he must resist the temptation to simply provide his own understanding. Instead, the sensecrafting leader must use the occasion of another’s lack of understanding as an opportunity to help the other craft sense. It can be helpful for the leader to recall his own previous feelings of not knowing, but he should not structure his task as simply recreating the process of coming to know within the other. There are at least two reasons to avoid this: first, the other will not be starting from the exact same point of ignorance that the leader did; secondly, such an approach would suggest that the leader has *the way* of understanding. Sensecrafting rejects these sorts of absolutes. What is being sought is not *the one way*, but rather *a way* of understanding that is generative for the parties involved.

Wurman (2001) offered further techniques for facilitating this process:

When you are communicating with others, let them see that you don’t understand everything either. If you talk to them with the attitude that you know everything, you will stifle their natural curiosity . . . because you will intimidate them into silence. (p. 85)

Adopting this attitude of openness, humility, and even curiosity, will encourage participative behaviors within the group. In this way, the leader can empower characters to shape the collective story.

If the sensecrafting leader is to nurture multiple perspectives, the art of listening is vital. Listening provides the opening from which the leader can understand the perspective that others are holding. Listening also represents a form of respect, which signals to participants that their contributions are valued. Isaacs (1999) articulated a kind of listening that builds our capacity to think together:

[Listening together] entails making a fundamental shift of perspective. It means taking into account not only what things look like from one's own perspective, but how they look and feel from the perspective of the whole web of relationships among the people concerned. . . . We can enlarge our sense of ourselves—our sense of identity—so that we become what a colleague of mine [Mark Gerzon] once termed 'an advocate for the whole.' (p. 103)

However, simply to listen is not enough. If we listen for what is confirming of what we already believe, we will simply reinforce our own worldview. We must also listen for what is different. People usually "listen in a way that is self-confirming: They look for evidence that they are right and that others are wrong" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 99). The antidote, Isaacs argued, is to

follow the disturbance. . . . You can start to see what you have been missing. . . . You can learn to listen for the sources of the difficulty, whether it is in you or others. Instead of looking for evidence that confirms your point of view, you can look for what disconfirms it, what challenges it. (p. 99)

Such a type of listening requires the sensecrafter to be open to learning, to believe in the process and to assume that our collective wisdom is more profound than what any of us knows alone.

Listening to others is a way to help them cultivate their own voice, so that they can be an active participant, an author, in the sensecrafting process. Weick (n.d.)

encouraged leaders to:

“ . . . make it possible for people to talk their way from the superficial, through the complex, on to the profound. Listen to the words people are saying, help them find other words that connect with human strengths rather than with darkness and evil. Help them talk their way into resilience. (para. 12)

The sensecrafting leader holds a philosophy that believes in the values of plurivocality, in the power of that which arises when many perspectives are included in constructing the story. It is this belief that underlies the sensecrafting leader's actions as he listens to others, encourages them to find their voice, and nurtures their participation.

Point of view. Stories are told from a particular perspective or point of view.

Point of view is a selection, it represents the choice to look here and not elsewhere. Like the photographer makes an implicit editing choice by where she points the camera, and the width of the camera angle she uses, a point of view selects a slice of life for inspection.

Selection of point of view is an important choice. A frame that is too narrow will filter out salient details. But a frame too broad might include so much information that the data remains in an undifferentiated state. In the one case, information is prematurely excluded; in the other, the information is still potentially available but is overlooked. The frame must be calibrated to capture all that is relevant, and sufficient processing must be brought to bear to scan all that is within frame.

Greater experience can result in the availability of more potential models if the individual has remained open and curious, and has not fallen into habit, attempting to

force the world into accustomed frames, and failing to account for information that resists existing constructs. Experience is only valuable when it is accompanied by openness.

The sensecrafting leader would have sensitivity to several aspects of point of view. She would have an awareness of the fact of editing; realizing that what is perceived is only a part of reality. She would possess sensitivity to how her filters, biases, mental models evolved, allowing her to be more critical of what she perceives. She would have the skill to adjust the mechanisms of her perception, including her mental models, filters, and biases. This skill is what is cultivated in transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) or what Argyris and Schön (1978) called Learning II.

Setting. Point of view is tightly coupled with context. The act of framing defines what is foreground and what is background. But even while we place most of our attention on what is inside the frame, an appreciation of the context within which our frame resides is of paramount importance. In storytelling, context appears in the form of *setting*. The setting defines the place and time in which events unfold. Too, a certain tone, or spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*) can be a strong attribute of setting. So much of the charm of the movie *Forrest Gump* (Finerman & Zemeckis, 1994) derives from the intersection of place and time, and the *Zeitgeist* that the viewer associates with that unique intersection. As Forrest witnesses the racial integration of his school, fights in Vietnam or becomes a pawn in Richard Nixon's overtures toward China, he is, unlike the viewer, blissfully ignorant of the historical significance of the settings in which he continually finds himself. Forrest's obliviousness helps define the mental challenges that he bears.

The sensecrafting leader, on the other hand, needs an astute sensitivity to the dimensions of time, location, and *Zeitgeist*. This leader must know exactly where he or

she is in this three dimensional space. Even more so, he or she must seek to influence it, to create a setting that nurtures all the aspects of sensecrafting.

In the discipline of knowledge management, context is so significant that special terms have been invoked to capture its qualities: for example the Welsh word *Cynefin* and the Japanese word *ba*. *Ba* is used to describe the context within which shared knowledge can emerge:

. . . *ba* can be thought of as a shared space for emerging relationships. . . . *Ba* provides a platform for advancing individual and/or collective knowledge. It is from such a platform that a transcendental perspective integrates all information needed. . . . According to the theory of existentialism, *ba* is a context which harbors meaning. Thus, we consider *ba* to be a shared space that serves as a foundation for knowledge creation. (Nonaka & Konno, 1998, p. 40)

Nonaka and Toyama (2003) outlined a number of attributes that are characteristic of *good ba* (a generative context that gives rise to knowledge creation). These include the transcendence of contradiction through dialectic thinking and action, a tolerance for multiple viewpoints, a fluid, mutable quality, and permeable boundaries that “can protect the *ba* from outside influence and let necessary contexts in at the same time” (p. 7).

Snowden (2000) likewise places an emphasis on the primacy of context, invoking the Welsh word, *Cynefin*. According to Snowden, *Cynefin* eludes definition in English, but can be approximated with the terms *habitat*, *acquainted* and *familiar*. Theatre Director, Iwan Brioc (n.d.), describes *Cynefin* as

. . . not only a place in which deep personal memories reside, but places which bring about a feeling on the fringes of awareness, that the rock, the tree, the water, the earth and the sky around you remember you and are joyful at your return.

Snowden (2000) also resorted to the realm of the artist in order to find an adequate translation, quoting the painter Kyffin Williams: “[*Cynefin*] describes [the] relationship [between] the place of your birth and of your upbringing, the environment in

which you live and to which you are naturally acclimatized” (cited in Snowden, 2000, p. 237).

Snowden (2000) was careful to distinguish Cynefin from *ba*. While both concepts are about a shared context, Cynefin is specifically focused on a shared history. This shared history brings with it the danger of limiting perception. However, Cynefin offers the benefit of “enabl[ing] an instinctive and intuitive ability to adapt to conditions of profound uncertainty” (Snowden, 2002, p. 104). Another important aspect of Cynefin is the idea of history. We never begin with an empty context; there is always some backstory that is brought to bear on the situation. Snowden (2002) stated “. . . all players in that system come with the baggage, positive and negative derived from multiple histories” (p. 104).

An understanding of the presence and qualities of *field* can provide insight. Scientists such as biologist Rupert Sheldrake (1988) and systems theorist Ervin Laszlo (1990) have proposed the existence of fields to explained the emergence of new life forms and psi-phenomena respectively. Like other types of fields, Sheldrake and Laszlo’s conceptions are unseen forces whose presence is indicated by their effects on the world. Gravitational and electro-magnetic fields are two well-known examples. Drawing upon C.G. Jung’s work, Conforti (1999) posits the existence of archetypal fields that organize energy. According to Jung (1936/1969), “. . . the archetypes are the unconscious images of the instincts themselves, in other words, they are the patterns of instinctual behavior” (p. 43). So, an archetypal field is something unseen that organizes the behavior of humans into pattern. The recognition of patterns is the key to perceiving archetypes; just as we can ‘see’ the wind by its effects on a pond or a tree, we can know the archetype through its presence as pattern.

Wheatley (1999) offers a compelling example of how she has experienced fields. At one point in her career, she organized a number of visits to her company's store locations to study the customer service offered within the retail chain. Wheatley, and the co-workers who accompanied her on the visits, began to realize that they could immediately sense the quality of good customer service upon entering a store. As Wheatley described it:

I am positive that in each [store] where customers felt welcome, there was a leader who, in word and deed, filled space with clear and consistent messages about how customers were to be served. The field was strong in its congruence; it influenced behavior only in one direction. Because of the power of this field, the outcome was assured: outstanding customer service. (p. 55)

The leaders whom Wheatley describes were not necessarily conscious of fields or their effects. These leaders may have stumbled upon the techniques for creating the field of good customer service through trial and error or some other happenstance. They may not have understood the roots of their own success. But what if they did? How much more powerful would their efforts be if they could employ their efforts deliberately to create the conditions to cultivate a certain type of field? Wheatley hints at what some of the required skills would be. One leadership attribute would be the ability to create messages that are congruent with the field.

A sensecrafting leader would want a sensitivity to archetypal fields so that she can read the drama, so that she will have a sense of what might happen next, so that when there is a surprise, she can tune into what is arising. Are we entering a period of chaos (before the order can be seen), or has a new field come to dominate? In either event, sensitivity to these dynamics can help the leader in responding in a thoughtful way—especially if she aspires to shape the setting.

Plot. The heart of story resides in plot. The plot can be thought of as the thread that weaves together the various elements of the story (Czarniawska, 1997). The plot occupies what painters call negative space, the so-called empty territory between the objects of a painting. While our eye might be pulled to the objects in a painting, it is really the negative space that places those objects in a context and gives them meaning. A similar phenomenon can be observed in music; it is the pauses between notes that defines the pace of the song and that separates music from a random cacophony of sound. Plot resides in these in between spaces. Thayer (1988) conceived these meaningful connections as the “knots that bind together” (p. 258). In fact, Thayer’s conception of leadership, is intimately tied to the ability to work with the meanings held in the *knots*: “The leader is one who tinkers with social governance—as that has its source in the meanings of things, in the ‘knots’ that bind things together” (p. 259). I see this as an emerging sort of space, a setting imbued with relationships coming together to create meaning. Like a stage director, the sensecrafting leader must orchestrate the actions of the players to convey that meaning to the audience.

Boje (2001) offers this definition of plot: “the chaining of cause and effect or stimulus and response into a pattern, structure or network” (p. 108). Boje builds on this preliminary definition with a deeper conception that ties to Thayer’s (1988) ideas of *knots*: “Plot also relates to tracing the microhistory and textuality of relationships between obstacles to human intentions, antecedents, behaviour, contexts and outcomes in webs of other events” (p. 108).

Much as we saw that setting is subject to field effects, so are plots in that they tend to take on characteristic forms, such as tragedy, comedy or romance. Each of these

genres has their own dominant plot forms. Plot serves as the organizing or structuring thread that weaves together the various elements of story.

Plot and authorship are tightly tied together. The force of plot makes meaningful connections between events in a way that renders them into a coherent whole. Plot is not a naturally occurring phenomena existing out there in reality, but rather a construction that we humans overlay onto events. The layering on of plot is the act of authorship and it implies an interpretation. White (1987) describes it thusly:

In this world, reality wears the mask of a meaning, the completeness and fullness of which we can only imagine, never experience. Insofar as historical stories can be completed, can be given narrative closure, can be shown to have had a plot all along, they give to reality the odor of the ideal. This is why the plot of a historical narrative is always an embarrassment and has to be presented as ‘found’ in the events rather than put there by narrative techniques. (p. 21)

In the art of sensecrafting, it is important to remember that plot is *created*, not *found*, as White (1987) pointed out. If plot were something only to be discovered, this implies that there exists only the one thread of meaning. In reality, many possible plots co-exist, a phenomenon that Thayer (1988) calls our attention to with his word *alternity*. Sensecrafting leaders help their collectives to find the alternity that moves the action forward in a generative manner.

In this chapter, I have presented my own concept of sensecrafting and then provided its underpinnings in a review of the literature. The literature review has included an examination of constructivism, sensemaking, participative leadership, narrative and storytelling. In Chapter 3, I will outline the methodology that I used in my study of sensecrafting in leaders.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

I held two objectives—one micro and one macro—for my research. The micro objective was to create a more generative work environment for study participants. The macro objective was to create learning about techniques that can be used by others to replicate positive results encountered in the research process. In this way, insights created through the study benefited study participants while making a contribution to the literature. The research sought to investigate the presence of sensecrafting amongst leaders and to determine whether the concept of sensecrafting and its deliberate employment is meaningful to study participants.

This chapter describes the method used in the present study. The overarching approach was action research, with the specific methodology drawing from action science, HPR, and narrative analysis. The following sections first explore these approaches, examining their interrelationships and appropriateness for my investigation. Next, I will look at the philosophical underpinnings of hermeneutics and how hermeneutics is related to the study of sensemaking. Finally, I will describe the research design, including data collection and data analysis and specific techniques to be applied during work with the participants, ethical considerations and the validity of the research.

Research Design

Action research. Action research is an approach that is very compatible with my research objectives. In my study, I sought to lead participants through a process of sensecrafting, which I define as facilitating collective, conscious sensemaking. A key tenet of action research, as articulated by Lewin, is that we learn most about a system when we seek to change it (Lewin & Grabbe, 1945). Action research provides a frame for

helping us organize that activity so that our learning can be more deliberate. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) added:

Action research is less a separate culture of inquiry than it is a statement of intention and values. The intention is to influence or change a system, and the values are those of participation, self-determination, empowerment through knowledge, and change. (p. 127)

These attributes of action research make it an appropriate approach for achieving my research objectives. Sensecrafting is carried out for the purpose of inspiring action in order to collectively realize a greater vision of what could be. Sensecrafting, like action research, is based on assumptions of participation, self-determination and empowerment.

As I have conceived it, sensecrafting involves working with the stories that we tell ourselves. There are striking parallels between how I think about these stories and how Argyris and Schön (1996) describe working with theories-in-use.

Each member of an organization constructs his own representation of the theory-in-use of the whole, but his picture is always incomplete. He strives continually to complete his picture by redescribing himself in relation to others in the organization. As conditions change, he remakes his descriptions; other individuals do likewise. There is a continual, more or less concerted meshing of individuals' images of their activity in the context of their collective interaction. (p. 15)

The stories that we tell ourselves can be thought of in terms of theories-in-use.

Three varieties of stories are most relevant to this research: (a) the stories I tell myself about myself; (b) the stories I tell myself about others; (c) the stories others tell themselves. To thrive in an organization, an individual must navigate all these varieties of stories, ultimately composing and enacting successful stories of self and organization.

Action research is appealing to me for this study because it is also concerned with bringing to consciousness that which may be operating below the level of awareness. This is particularly true of the version of action research articulated by Argyris and Schön (1991), action science. Of significance, "*Action research* takes its cues—its questions,

puzzles, and problems—from the perceptions of practitioners within particular, local practice contexts” (p. 86). I would like to call attention to the words *practitioners’ perceptions*, for as I have established above, from the viewpoint of constructivism, we construct our reality; our perceptions (regardless of their veracity) play a prominent role in determining what we experience. Techniques that provide insight into our perceptions, then, have power to enable us to change our environments.

Luscher and Lewis (2008) further establish links between meaning-making, perception and action research:

Argyris (1993) explained that in changing times, managers often grapple with conflicting emotions tied to ‘undiscussable’ facets of organizational life. He called for more collaborative methods, stressing the potential for action research to support sensemaking and enable induction. Indeed, leveraging psychodynamic traditions, action researchers (e.g., Vince and Broussine, 1996; Westenholtz, 1993) have demonstrated how intervention may help actors surface more subconscious anxieties, cope with defenses, and alter their cognitive frames. (pp. 222-223)

Dewey, Hickman, and Alexander (1998) stated that inquiry “begins in an indeterminate situation, and not only begins in but is controlled by its specific qualitative nature.” (p. 207). Dewey et al.’s term *indeterminate situation* suggests a situation where our habitual patterns of sensemaking have been defied; inquiry is called upon to find a new way forward. The “inherent conflict, obscurity, or confusion [of the situation] blocks action. And the inquirer seeks to make that situation determinate, thereby restoring the flow of activity” (Argyris & Schön, 1991, p. 30). Here, again, we see parallels to action research and sensemaking. Stated in different language, we could say that for Dewey, inquiry was triggered by the need to engage in sensemaking. The inquiry espoused in action research is quite comparable to sensecrafting in that it seeks to engage in sensemaking in a deliberate manner, attending, for example, to our frames of reference and underlying assumptions.

A note about participatory action research. While there are strong parallels between my approach and participative action research (PAR), I have explicitly not selected a research methodology in this tradition because there are many traits associated with PAR that do not fit my particular domain of study. PAR is a methodology that, at least in its origins, is focused on inquiry by, and for, underprivileged people and groups. When the term has been used more broadly, for example in Western organizations, some PAR practitioners have objected. As Reason (1994) explained:

It is offensive because it is seen as a way that the rich establishment is once again co-opting and colonizing the world of the under-privileged . . . [and] . . . because to use the same term for significantly different processes confuses the necessary debate between the variety of collaborative inquiry approaches. (p. 13)

However, if we distance ourselves from the specific meanings tied to participatory action research, my research methodology is certainly action research, and it certainly has a strong participative element to it. The key difference is that my participants do not represent an underprivileged or disempowered group. Although, some participants may be viewed as relatively underprivileged within the hierarchy of their organizations (for example a lower level manager), they are still all individuals who have a greater opportunity to shape corporate opinion, policy and practice than the traditional participants who are considered in PAR. For this reason, I have deliberately avoided any suggestion that my research approach is PAR.

Action science. Argyris and Schön's (1996) *action science* is firmly rooted in their concepts about learning and the theories that individuals hold. A core concept in action science is the distinction between *single-loop* and *double-loop learning*. In *single-loop learning*, a shift takes place in the learner's strategies and assumptions, but the values of the learner's underlying theory of action remains unchanged. *Double-loop*

learning represents a deeper level of learning, where the learner challenges not only his strategies and assumptions, but also questions the values of his theory of action (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1990). Action science brings a rigorous approach to the pursuit of double-loop learning. “Action science refers to a broad approach to social practice that links human meaning making with the discovery and shaping of the causal theories that create our social world” (Friedman & Rogers, 2008, p. 253).

Isaacs (1999) articulated the benefits of the action science approach, stating that it provides:

A way of understanding why what we do is not always what we intend, or even what we are aware of, and of learning how to close these gaps. . . . Humans produce the[se] kinds of errors . . . consistently as long as they remain unaware of the rules that govern their behavior (p. 185).

With its concern for the tacit dimensions underlying our actions, action science provides a promising lens through which to study sensecrafting. It offers sufficient robustness to capture a multiplicity of perspectives, for its designers have an appreciation for the incompleteness of any one individual’s view of the organization and for the dynamic, unfolding nature of organization as a collection of shifting perspectives. As Argyris and Schön (1996) put it: “Each member of an organization constructs his own representation of the theory-in-use of the whole, but his picture is always incomplete. . . . There is a continual, more or less meshing” (p. 15). Here we see how sensecrafting, and Argyris and Schön’s own method of inquiry, action science, are interrelated.

Narrative research. Because my investigation is intimately related to storytelling, I have also drawn methodological approaches from narrative analysis and inquiry. The data that I collected was primarily *accounts*; I use the term following van Manen (1990) to denote qualitative data in the oral form. As a qualitative research

approach, narrative analysis provides an effective approach to probe beyond surface understandings to gain an appreciation of the research participants' perspectives. In order to achieve this deep level of understanding with the participants, the research approach departs from what is seen in more traditional approaches. As Polkinghorne (1988) articulates:

. . . Research interviews are most often unstructured. However, the researcher knows in advance the experience he or she wants the participant to describe and has often written out questions (or protocols) he or she wants the participant to cover. The interview proceeds as a . . . conversation . . . a give-and-take dialectic in which the interviewer follows the conversational threads opened up by the interviewee and guides the conversation toward producing a full account of the experience under investigation. (p. 142)

The narrative approach provides the means to reach a deeper level of appreciation for the participants' perspectives, to "understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 1).

Narrative research is distinct from more traditional question-and-answer type interviewing in that it seeks to avoid a situation where the researcher imposes an agenda or exercises control over what emerges (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Instead, the focus for the researcher is on directly eliciting the participant's stories (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher's primary role is supportive listening. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) outline four principles for the researcher: "Use open-ended not closed questions, the more open the better; elicit stories; avoid 'why' questions; and follow up using respondents' ordering and phrasing" (Chapter 3, Section 3).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that it is also appropriate for the researcher to assist the participant to organize his experiences as narrative:

Being familiar with narrative structures, the interviewer may take care to unfold temporal sequences, focus on who is the hero of the story and who are the antagonists and who are the hero's helpers, and try to ascertain the main plot of the story, the possible subplots, and the elements of tensions, conflicts, and resolutions. (p. 155)

However, there are attendant risks with this approach. For example, Frosh (2007) argues that an individual's life does not always have the coherence implied in a narrative telling. That is, the researcher must take care to not overdetermine the participant's stories. I used techniques of eliciting participants' stories as a main technique during the research conversations while keeping these caveats in mind.

Polyphony. As we saw earlier in Argyris and Schön's (1996) discussion of theories-in-use, organizations are comprised of multiple stories, being told simultaneously from multiple perspectives. Organizations constitute a polyphony of voices. This can pose a challenge to the researcher and I attempted to address this challenge directly. I was concerned with capturing these multiple voices and doing so in a way that preserves (to the extent possible) the integrity of these multiple perspectives. In order to achieve this intent, I first acknowledged the difficulty of anyone capturing another's story without filtering the story through one's own biases. Second, I rooted my approach in an underlying assumption of constructivism: our experiences are different in part because of the way we perceive them, and stories are a way to get a glimpse of the worldview that governs our experiencing of reality. When adopting such a perspective, the goal is not to reconcile contradictory stories but rather to find that which transcends the conflict.

The polyphony that occurs in organizations made hermeneutics an enticing approach to understand how collective meaning is generated amongst the many (often competing) stories we tell ourselves. In the next section, I will explore the underpinnings

of hermeneutics in some detail before embarking on a discussion of HPR, a methodology pioneered by Herda (1999).

Hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a discipline of interpretation that originally arose out of biblical studies. Biblical studies are made difficult by three distancing factors: language, time, and culture. Biblical scholars are challenged to not only translate from one language into another, but also have the added burden of deciphering meanings that are layered on through cultural significance that applied at a particular time in history, in a particular place. Providing a translation that is relevant to today's reader requires the simultaneous navigation of these multiple dimensions. Over time, the field of hermeneutics expanded beyond biblical texts, while maintaining its multi-dimensional characteristic.

Under the influence of German romanticism and idealism, hermeneutics expanded to encompass the entire realm of human science (Gadamer, 1994). With the publication of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1962), hermeneutics became "an interrogation into the deepest conditions for symbolic interaction and culture in general" (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2005). Heidegger's student, Hans-Georg Gadamer, further defined the field of philosophical hermeneutics. Ricoeur (1981/1998) describes philosophical hermeneutics as "the explication of the being-in-the-world displayed by the text. What is to be interpreted in the text is a proposed world which I could inhabit and in which I could project my ownmost possibilities" (p. 112). This points to hermeneutics' concern for not just interpretation, but with the nature of being itself. Hermeneutics becomes a kind of quest for the potential worlds that a text suggests. "To understand a text," Ricoeur (1998) elaborates, "we shall say, is not to find a lifeless sense which is contained therein, but to unfold the possibility of being indicated by the text" (p. 56).

The notion of *text* likewise underwent expansion. While originally *text* referred to written works, in philosophical hermeneutics, text takes on the broadest possible meaning. Text can refer to creations such as film, a painting, a fabric or even a conversation.

With HPR, Ellen Herda (1999) lays out a framework for applying hermeneutics as a research methodology. Several hermeneutical concepts are critical to understanding Herda's approach: Heidegger's concept of the fusion of horizons, distanciation, appropriation, and narrative. Collectively these concepts form the basis that allows one's understanding of a text to emerge. Each concept will be detailed below.

Fusion of horizons. Gadamer (1960/2004) defines horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p. 302). One's horizon, then, could be narrow, concerned primarily with what is close at hand. Or one could possess a more expansive horizon. The ability to adopt the perspective of another's horizon is critical to understanding that person's ideas. As Gadamer described:

If we fail to transpose ourselves into the historical horizon from which the traditionary text speaks, we will misunderstand the significance of what it has to say to us. . . . We must place ourselves in the other situation in order to understand it. (p. 303)

A fusion of horizons occurs when a person is able to understand from the other's perspective, and simultaneously brings her own horizon to bear on the situation, allowing a new understanding to emerge. Southern (1997) describes the process:

What emerges, is the joy of recognition of something more than what was previously known. When this sense of losing oneself takes place in conversation, we can create shared meaning, through coming to understand and appreciate the other, that which is different from us. (p. 86)

Achieving this fusion of horizons becomes the true goal of hermeneutic conversations: it is the seeking of a new understanding that transcends the pre-understandings of either party.

The concept of fusion of horizons relates to deliberate sensemaking through the attributes of discernment and framing. Framing represents how the individual chooses to select information from all that is available in the environment. In any given moment, there are an infinite number of ways that the individual could frame the situation. The way in which the individual chooses to frame the situation helps to define his horizon. And it is our frame of reference that can undergo expansion, or modification, in the fusion of horizons.

Distanciation. For spoken language to be considered from a hermeneutic perspective, it is necessary to capture the spoken word as a written text (Herda, 1999). However, in this act, distanciation occurs. Distanciation refers to the layers of abstraction that occur between the capturing of a text and its reading and interpretation. In the process of laying down the spoken word into writing, several forms of distanciation occur. According to Ricoeur, these include

the separation of the event of saying from the meaning of what is said; the separation of the intentions of the speakers from the meaning of the text; the referential difference between spoken and written discourse; and the world that the text when read points to. (Herda, 1999, p. 88)

Appreciating the operation of distanciation can facilitate deliberate sensemaking, which could be thought of as a process of slowing down and delayering our sensemaking. For example, in a typical conversation, there are two parties, each intending to get a point across. As they speak, what is said is not equivalent to what was intended, for the words pass through filters: the thought needs to be expressed in language and perhaps language

is insufficient to fully capture the individual's thoughts and intentions. Additionally, the speaker may be conflicted about the message, wanting consciously to put across one message, while perhaps unconsciously conveying something else. Once the speaker has spoken, she only has her own memory of what she said; this memory might be more aligned with what she intended to say than with what she actually said. Meanwhile, a similar process occurs for the listener. He hears something, which in part will be effected by what he expects to hear. His response will likely reinforce his interpretation of what he heard. Later, they will both remember what they thought was said. Each step along the way opens the possibility for gaps to arise, for example, between what was said and what was heard. Understanding the process of distanciation affords an opportunity to more actively observe one's own sensemaking.

Habermas (1981) conceived of the layers that occur in distanciation as three worlds: the subjective, the objective and the social. The subjective world refers to the author, from her own perspective, as well as the reader, from his own perspective. The objective world refers to the facts of the world-out-there. And the social world encompasses the intersubjective domain existing between the author and reader that is actualized by the text. Habermas explained this process: "Only to the extent that the formal reference system of the three worlds is differentiated can we form a reflective concept of 'world' and open up access to the world through the medium of common interpretive efforts . . ." (p. 69).

Genuinely entering into the possibility of intersubjectivity requires courage. As Gadamer (1960/2004) explained,

In fact our own prejudice is properly brought into play by being put at risk. Only by being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for him to have full play himself. (pp. 298-299)

Opening oneself to this play allows the space for appropriation to occur.

Appropriation. According to Ricoeur (1981/1998), distancing and appropriation together form a dialectic. Appropriation allows for an individual to re-integrate the lifeworld of the text into her newly expanded horizon. Ricoeur elaborated:

. . . appropriation is no longer to be understood. . . as a constitution of which the subject would possess the key. To understand is not to project oneself into the text; it is to receive an enlarged self from the apprehension of proposed worlds which are the genuine object of interpretation. (pp. 182-183)

We are changed by the text, experiencing an expansion of our horizon that allows new meaning to emerge.

Appropriation is the interpretative act that occurs after distancing wherein the researcher “make[s] the text one’s own after the act of distancing takes place,” (Herda, 1999, p. 86). This dialectic between distancing and appropriation are what differentiates HPR from positivistic traditions. Rather than assuming that the researcher can shed her pre-understandings, leaving these outside the experience of interpretation, distancing and appropriation provide a path toward the fused horizon.

The researcher’s orientation toward the research event as a whole gives opportunity for one to become a different person than before the research took place. It sets the researcher in a reflective and imaginary mode, thus opening new ways to think about the social problems that drew one to research in the first place. (Herda, 1999, p. 87)

Appropriation must take place if sensecrafting is to succeed in creating shared meaning for the collective. The members of the group must embrace the meaning that the group has collectively generated and make it their own; otherwise, it is not sensecrafting that has taken place. In such cases, the action is sensegiving, wherein one person or group passes along their made-sense to an individual and the individual accepts that made-sense as the way it is, without opening herself to the depth of meaning that can come from a

fusion of horizons. We can follow a corporate direction that we do not agree with. For example, a manager might comply with evaluating his employees' performance on a bell curve without believing that this method is fair, or even the best way to elicit high performance from his team. The manager who holds these conflicting beliefs, yet does not seek reconcile his understanding with the organization's is simply accepting made-sense. In contrast, the manager who actively seeks out the wisdom behind the policy and shares his own perspective with the policy makers is searching for a perspective that transcends both initial positions. Once this has occurred, the manager can appropriate the new understanding.

Narrative. Researchers using the hermeneutic participatory method begin with the creation of texts. The first text is the transcription of the conversation held with participants. A second text is created from the transcription as the researcher draws out quotes and records the reactions of participants to reading the transcript. The researcher then creates a third text wherein the purpose is to discover a plot. As Ricoeur (1984) explained:

. . . narration preserves the meaning that is behind us so that we can have meaning before us. There is always more order in what we narrate than in what we have actually already lived; and this narrative excess of order, coherence and unity, is a prime example of the creative power of narration. (p. 22)

Narrative serves to weave together what has been deconstructed through distancing and appropriation into a meaningful whole. Narrative is reflective of retrospective sensemaking, wherein the events of the past are given order through emplotment.

The above discussion has outlined some of the significant concepts of hermeneutics that Herda (1999) drew upon in constructing her method of HPR. Herda's approach uses hermeneutics' concern for the creation of meaning as a lens through which

to consider conversations that are conducted in qualitative research. I find Herda's hermeneutical approach to be particularly effective for an exploration of sensemaking given the shared importance of meaning and interpretation in both disciplines. In particular, it would seem that the concept of the fusion of horizons bears much similarity to my idea of sensecrafting. Sensecrafting—defined as the process of facilitating collective, conscious sensemaking—could be thought of as a deliberate effort to cultivate the fusion of horizons within a group of people.

An integrated approach. My intention with this study is to weave together the approaches of HPR and action science as part of an inquiry into stories in organizations, both those that people tell themselves about their role and purpose and the stories that they find extant in the organizations. I use *inquiry* in the sense that Argyris and Schön (1996) employed it:

inquiry [is] the intertwining of thought and action carried out by individuals in interaction with one another on behalf of the organization to which they belong in ways that change the organization's theories of action and become embedded in organizational artifacts such as maps, memories, and programs. (p. 191)

However, my scope is broadened to include individuals acting in their own interest.

The research approach that I am defining for my study is something akin to what Stringer (1999) calls community-based action research:

The task of the Community-based action researcher . . . is to develop a context in which individuals and groups with divergent perceptions and interpretations can formulate a construction of their situation that makes sense to them all--a joint construction. Guba and Lincoln (1989) designate this a hermeneutic dialectic process, because new meanings emerge as divergent views are compared and contrasted. (p. 45)

There are strong parallels between Stringer (1999) and Guba and Lincoln's (1989) concept of emergent meanings and the process of sensecrafting as I have conceived it. Furthermore, what Stringer (1999) defines as the task of researcher could also be thought

of as a requisite behavior for the sensecrafting leader: The sensecrafter develops contexts in which a joint construction can emerge. It is precisely because I find such striking parallels in my concept of sensecrafting and in action research methodologies that I chose this particular research perspective from which to approach my study.

In order to access and understand the stories that make up the fabric of the participant's organization, as she understands it, my research required an approach to capture these stories. I think of my approach as *storycatching*, a term borrowed from Baldwin (2005). My participants and I embarked upon an endeavor of storycatching: a search for the stories that participants are telling themselves, but also a quest to capture the stories present within the organization, the polyphony that Boje (2001) and other narrative theorists describe. Using techniques of action research and HPR, my participants and I mapped out a course whereby we captured and explored the stories that swirl around their places of work. We gathered the stories that describe the identity and purpose of the organization. We wrote down these individuals' own stories of belonging and of being a part. As Baldwin (2005) describes them "Storycatchers are intrigued with making—perhaps driven to make—sense of experience and to make stories out of our sense" (p. 30).

Design Elements of the Research

My intent was to engage in action research that is characterized by aspects of action science and HPR. The study will draw from action science an understanding that organizations are dynamic, multi-perspectival organisms. The view gleaned from any one participant is only partial. As Argyris and Schön (1996) explained,

An organization is like an organism, each of whose cells contains a particular, partial, changing image of itself in relation to the whole. And like such an

organism, the organization's practice stems from these very images: its theory-in-use is dependent on the ways in which its members represent it. (p. 15-16)

This philosophical stance in action science makes it appropriate for an investigation that is concerned with understanding the polyphony that exists within organizations. HPR provides a mechanism for grounding such an exploration of the many voices of an organization from the perspective of the individual participant.

HPR, as defined by Herda (1999), takes the conversation between researcher and participant as a text subject to hermeneutic interpretation. Together, the researcher and participant create meaning through what Elden and Levin (1991) termed *cogenerative dialogue*:

Empowering participation occurs between insiders and outsiders in what we call *cogenerative dialogue*. Both insiders and outsiders operate out of their initial frames of reference but communicate at a level where frames of reference can be changed and new frames generated. (p. 134)

In this manner, a fusion of horizons can occur between researcher (outsider) and participant (insider) enabling both to emerge from the research with expanded horizons of understanding their own ways of meaning making. Through understanding their own process participants can increase their effectiveness in facilitating collective sensemaking in others. The researcher will likewise gain from the process, learning from the participants' experience and from the process of creating meaning together with the participants. As the researcher experiences a fusion of horizons with the participants, she will become a different researcher, bringing altered perspectives to her conversations with all participants.

Research assumptions. Action research and HPR are research methodologies that are concerned with establishing a constructive way forward for participants, and by their example, for others. There is an inherent presumption in these methodologies that

our experience of the world, rooted in constructivism, defies objectivity. As Tandon (1988) explained, participatory research “explodes the myth of neutrality and objectivity and emphasizes the principles of subjectivity, involvement, insertion and consensual validation” (p. 7).

As has been discussed, in carrying out action science, one concern for the researcher is to attend to theories-in-use as opposed to espoused theories. Espoused theories are deceptive and can easily masquerade as theories-in-use. Participants might be in denial that their espoused theories are not the theories that are truly driving their behavior. The researcher must remain vigilant that any accounts gathered might be the product of theories-in-use.

Another important consideration is the perceptual biases that individuals bring to the situation. This holds for both the researcher and for participants. Lewin (1951) referred to the individual’s perceptual disposition as *Einstellung* (mindset). The anti-dote to *Einstellung* is a vigilance to its potentially distorting effects and an embracing of *self-knowing* (Bradbury, Mirvis, Neilsen, & Pasmore, 2008).

Beliefs and assumptions of the researcher. Action research and the hermeneutic tradition of research have a refreshing take on the role of the researcher. First of all, the primary researcher is not given a place of privilege, assumed to be wiser than a set of subjects who will be experimented upon. Instead researcher and research participants are seen more as equals, and research participants are privileged for their closeness to the situation under inquiry. They are assumed to be the ones empowered to effect any change. Furthermore, it is recognized that the primary researcher holds preconceptions and prejudices just like any other human being.

Though it is perhaps impossible to delineate my own preconceptions and prejudices, for I can only discuss those that I am aware of, and many preconceptions and prejudices like to shrink away from the light of awareness, here I will outline what I know about myself that might help to elucidate my role as researcher.

As a white female I belong to the racial majority and gender minority. As a PhD student, I am privileged from an educational standpoint. Culturally, I had the fortune of experiencing diverse racial and ethnic experiences in the workplace: in high school I worked in nursing home, where the staff were predominantly Filipino, Latino and African American. After college, my first job was managing a movie theatre where the staff, and often the customer base, was predominantly African America. Both the theatre, and my home, were located in a racially integrated suburb of Chicago: Oak Park, Illinois. Finally, I have experienced geographic diversity, having lived in Illinois, Minnesota, Denmark, North Carolina, Florida, Arizona and California. I am well traveled in Europe and the continental U.S., but not beyond, with my most significant trip being to the Soviet Union in 1988.

My ideology as it pertains to this work has been outlined above. Four key points summarize my beliefs relevant to this research:

- Though we are often unaware of it, our thoughts shape, even create, our reality (Bruner, 1986).
- A sense of meaning and purpose is vital to any human pursuit (Frankl, 1946/1985).
- Organizations are stronger when they have processes that give voice to and engage the hearts and minds of all their members (Blanchard, 2007; MacGregor, 2000).
- We are by nature storytellers. Story is the major unifying structure through which we tend to organize experience (Boje, 2001).

Participants and selection criteria. In action research, the nature of the participant's role is also different from more traditional, positivistic research. Participants needed to demonstrate several attributes to successfully fill the role of co-researcher demanded in my study. They needed to exhibit a capacity for self-reflection and self-awareness, have an interest in exploring their work situation in some depth, be willing and able to challenge their own assumptions, and try new behavior.

Therefore, I screened for these attributes as part of the preliminary solicitation process and in the opening stage of the research conversation. As Polkinghorne (1988) described, "The focus of qualitative inquiries is on describing, understanding, and clarifying a human experience. It requires collecting a series of intense, full, and saturated descriptions of the experience under investigation" (p. 139). In my pursuit of full and saturated descriptions of experience and to incorporate different perspectives into the research, I sought to recruit a panel of participants that are diverse from the perspectives of prior work experiences, organizational position, education, and gender. As has previously been discussed, our mental models, which consist of our beliefs, values and assumptions, hold significant sway over what and how we perceive our worlds. By conducting this work with participants from different backgrounds, my hope was to expand the range of perspectives brought to the work.

I solicited study participants who were known to me personally. This afforded me some sense about whether participants possessed the desired traits described above. I initially planned a special screening process in addition to the research conversations; however, this proved unwieldy for participants from a time perspective. Instead, I used the first session as a continuation of the screening process. During the opening conversation, I focused on two areas in particular: my model of perception (see Figure 1

on page 46) and the research process outlined in the Participant Guidebook (see Appendix A). To assess participant readiness, I focused my questions (see Appendix B) on three key areas: the individual's previous experience with transformative learning and self-reflection, their reaction to the topics and methods of exploration that my study will employ, and their openness to challenging their own mental models.

Full participation in the proposed research required a significant commitment of the participant's time. I estimated that each participant would need to devote 6 to 8 hours to the research activities, one to one interactions; and carrying out agreed upon activities. I believed that full engagement would also yield benefits for participants in that they should gain insight, and would hopefully experience perspective transformation and that the challenging of their own mental models that would open new horizons of possibility to them. In the initial solicitation I asked questions about these possible benefits and whether participants were willing to make the commitment to the research project. Individuals selected for the study were provided with an overview of the research objectives and approach, including details about action research and HPR.

Research that relies on individuals to self-report their experiences has inherent limitations tied to the participant's ability to express herself and to be self-reflective. "Because experience is not directly observable, data about it depend on the participants' ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience and to effectively communicate what they discern through the symbols of language," (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 138). Through the screening process, I provided examples of what it will be like to participate in the research. This information included the types of topics we are likely to discuss and how I would engage participants in these topics. I provided examples of the

kinds of questions that I will ask, the types of narrative accounts that I was seeking from participants, and how we would work with this information.

Initially, I invited 11 managers as participants, and ultimately secured the participation of six. Participants are leaders holding a variety of positions in industry and health care. To protect the participants' identity, pseudonyms appear in the report write up and geographical locations and other identifiers have been masked. I did not discuss with anyone who my study participants were or the nature of our interactions. To protect the organizations' anonymity, identifying attributes have been altered.

My research participants were the following individuals (identified by pseudonym):

1. Carl, a manager of several teams of customer service agents at a technology company.
2. Ian, a vice president of a department of customer service agents at an insurance company.
3. Marion, a director in headquarters at an online retailer.
4. Michael, a Chief Operating Officer at an investment fund.
5. Ruth, a manager of a team of customer service agents at a financial services company.
6. Josie, a supervisor in a county mental health department.

Validity. Given the assumptions and philosophical grounding that underpin action research and HPR, the criteria for validity of this research cannot be easily ported from more positivistic traditions. In considering validity in participatory research, it is helpful to return to the objectives of this kind of research.

Validity as applied to my research context will primarily take the form of a research design that can likely fulfill the objectives of the research endeavor. I enhanced validity by following qualitative research rules developed by Argyris et al. (1990) and the

method outlined by Herda (1999). These rules include a focus on inquiry, looking for disconfirmation (both of my own assumptions and encouraging participants to challenge their own), and the use of activities to test assumptions.

Ethical considerations. Ethical considerations for the proposed research include the following: confidentiality of the information collected, safety of the participants, transparency of the process, and self-determination on the part of participants. One important criterion is that the benefits created by the research outweigh any potential risk to participants.

The parameters of confidentiality and consent were explained to participants up front. This will include a detailed description of how collected accounts are to be handled and how anonymity will be protected.

At the beginning of the process, I provided participants an overview of the conversation protocols and the researcher's repertoire. Throughout the process, I was clear about which techniques from the repertoire I am drawing from, and I enlisted participants in conversations about the appropriateness of these techniques, and their level of comfort in employing the techniques.

An important aspect of participant concerned protecting participants from their own statements that may be career limiting if heard by others in their organization. I protected participants from this possibility in several ways:

- I used pseudonyms and masked all identifiers
- I did not include information that would limit the pool from which the participant could come
- While I secured organizational permission where necessary, I did not share participant names with anyone within the organization

- In some cases, I left information out of the data collection and analysis if it seemed it would put the individual at risk

Self-determination of the participants meant that the participants were able to exercise freewill in choosing whether to participate and were at liberty to exit the study at any time for any reason. There was no coercion or compensation to participate in the study.

Research Design, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

Research design: The three-stage process. The research was conducted in three stages (see Appendix D). The goal of each stage was to provide participants the proper grounding and orientation before passing to the subsequent stage. The research was conducted through in-person or telephone interactions, which consisted of one to one sessions between each participant and myself.

The three stages of the research were: Opening, Exploring/Sensecrafting, and Closing. A summary of each stage appears in the Participant Guidebook (see Appendix A). A key goal of the Opening Stage was to ground participants in the terminology and philosophy of the research. This was accomplished in one to one conversations with me and through reviewing the presentation in Appendix A, which I created to share with participants to help them to become familiar with some of the important concepts in the study.

Participants were introduced to key concepts such as mental models, frames and assumptions and the idea of organizations as competing stories. After our initial phone consultation, they took away a homework assignment to identify a challenge within their organization that they would like to focus upon.

Another key aspect of the Opening Stage was to begin to have participants attend to the stories they were telling themselves. Orienting questions established a backdrop for our initial conversation. Questions included: “What are you noticing?” “What are you hearing?” “What are you saying?” “What are you doing?”

In the Exploring Stage, the key point was to have participants explore how their own stories fit into the larger fabric of the workplace. To do so, participants engaged in inquiry, explored assumptions and looked for dissonance between their own stories and those present in the organization.

Sensecrafting focused on participants’ deliberately reshaping their own stories or crafting new ones. The purpose was to develop stories that are more in line with desired outcomes, that are built on generative assumptions, and that more explicitly address any possible dissonance with other organizational stories. Participants also discussed how they would involve others in creating these stories. Interaction in the second stage consisted of a one to one session with me. The orienting question for this stage was: can we create more generative stories?

The final stage was Closing. In this stage, participants and I had our final one-to-one interaction and discussed participants’ reflections on the process. The orienting question for this stage was: “what have we learned?” and “how will what you have learned affect your actions as a leader?”

Broadly, the purpose of these interactions was:

- to establish the extent to which participants already engage in sensecrafting;
- to capture the stories that participants are telling themselves about their organization and their role in it;
- to capture the stories that they perceive to be extant in their organization;

- to determine the extent to which participants can deliberately author different stories for themselves and their organizations.

Toward that aim, I incorporated the following rules from Argyris et al. (1990) through the techniques I employed and the questions that I asked into my research design, including combining advocacy with inquiry, making reasoning explicit, actively seeking disconfirming data and alternative explanations, affirming the making of mistakes in the service of learning, and designing ongoing experiments to test competing views.

I have compiled a number of questions (see Appendix B) related to the objectives of each stage. The plan was not to use all of the questions, but rather to create a pool of questions from which I could draw as the research progressed. While working with one participant, it became clear that it would be helpful to document all these possible assignments and the questions associated with them. Therefore, approximately one third of the way through the research dialogue, I created 18 cards that represented potential assignments (see Appendix C). A typical participant would work on two or three specific cards during our time together.

The participant guide book. I created a 13-page Participant Guide Book (see Appendix A) in the form of a PowerPoint presentation to be used in orienting new participants. We reviewed the content of the guidebook during our first session. The guidebook addressed concepts such as the questions that motivated the study, the concepts of sensemaking and sensecrafting, my model of perception (see Figure 1 on page 46), the research methodology and process and a preview of some of the inter-session work. I found that the participant guidebook provided a strong background and an effective preview of the work that we would be doing together. Typically, upon

completion of our review of the guidebook, my research partners were ready with one or two topics for our investigation together.

Hermeneutic participatory research approach to data collection and data analysis. I took the following steps to collect and analyze the data. This approach is modified from Herda's (1999) protocol in participatory hermeneutic inquiry.

The first step was to fix the discourse by transcribing taped conversations. Most research dialogues were conducted via telephone, using the Skype technology to make an audio recording. While I completed a few of the transcriptions myself, the majority of the recordings were transcribed using a transcription service. I then reviewed and edited each of the transcriptions for accuracy. Those dialogues that were conducted in person were recorded on a digital recorder. In total, approximately 18 hours of recordings were captured. This translated into approximately thirty single spaced pages of transcription per participant.

I am sensitive to the distancing that occurs between the saying of the word, the audio recording of it, and the transcription of it. Herda (1999) explained:

Ricoeur suggests that [the] fixation [of the text], distancing, takes place in four ways: the separation of the event of saying from the meaning of what is said; the separation of the intentions of the speakers from the meaning of the text; the referential difference between spoken and written discourse; and the world that the text when read points to. The task remains to make the text one's own after the act of distancing takes place. This subsequent act is one of appropriation--an interpretive event. . . The researcher's orientation toward the research event as a whole gives opportunity for one to become a different person than before the research took place. It sets the researcher in a reflective and imaginary mode. (pp. 98-99)

In the case of my work, an additional layer of distancing was added in those cases where a professional transcriber captured the text from the audio. There were many cases where something was inaudible to the transcriber and a note of this was made. Often

I was easily able to fill in the blanks (e.g., proper nouns), but sometimes I had to check the recording. More troubling was when the transcriber simply got it wrong: “road” instead of “rote” or “past” instead of “path.” These could only be picked up through a careful re-listening to the recordings.

Further, I benefited from reading the transcripts and listening to the recordings. For example, in early conversations, I caught myself cutting off my dialogue partner. This revelation was embarrassing to me, however provided the opportunity to listen more carefully in later conversations. I also found that the process led me to be a better listener in general: withholding my anticipation of where the research participant might be heading and also asking more clarifying questions to ensure that I was not jumping to conclusions.

The second step was to pull out significant statements, develop themes, and place them within categories. I did this by reading through the transcripts and identifying the most salient quotes and associated these with themes. I was mindful to the idea that repetition is not a prerequisite to a theme having significance. As Moules (2002) explained,

Each re-reading of the text is an attempt to listen for echoes of something that might expand possibilities of understanding. This is distinct from a search for themes, which is generally validated by the reemergence and repetition of specific ideas. Hermeneutics, rather, pays attention to the instance, the particular, the event of something that does not require repetition to authenticate its arrival (p. 14).

Therefore, I considered material eligible as a theme even if it was only mentioned one time.

The third step was to substantiate the themes or important ideas with quotes from the conversation transcripts. This was a fairly straightforward task, as the themes were identified from reviewing the transcripts themselves.

The fourth step was to examine the themes to determine what they mean in light of the theoretical framework of critical hermeneutics. Give examples of learning experiences and fusion of horizons on the part of participants. In this case, I went back over the material and considered it from a hermeneutical perspective. I used this lens to dive more deeply into the meaning of our dialogues, following wisdom from Porter and Robinson (2011):

[Hermeneutics] endeavors to describe the already present structure of human understanding and to highlight the conditions for clearer insight and comprehension. Hermeneutics does not directly seek to set up a new way of seeing the world; that is, it does not prescribe how we “ought” to reflect upon and think about things (although there is a very real sense in which such changes may result from thinking hermeneutically), but to describe how we already do reflect and think.” (Introduction, para. 7)

The fifth step was to provide opportunity for continued discussion and conversations with participants using the developing text where appropriate. The design of three separate dialogues, with intervals of approximately 2 weeks in between, lent itself to revisiting the text and emergence of themes in the subsequent dialogues.

The sixth step was to set a context for the written discussion. For each participant, I crafted a profile, which explained who the individual is within their organization and the main areas that they expressed in our exploration.

The seventh step was to discuss the research problem at a theoretical level, thus implementing a further practical use for critical hermeneutics. This task is completed in Chapter 4, wherein I bring the participant themes and the hermeneutic perspective to bear on the principle research question and discuss to what extent participants exemplified qualities of sensecrafting.

The next steps are addressed in Chapter 5 wherein I discuss implications and suggestions for further study. These steps include ferreting out implications from the

written discussion that provide insight and new direction for the issue or problem under investigation and bringing out those aspects of the study that merit further study.

The final step was to give examples of learning experiences and fusion of horizons on the part of participants that took place during the research process. This material is covered in chapter 4 in the Participant Portraits section.

Summary

In the above sections, I have outlined how I approached my study of sensecrafting. I began with a description of action research, articulating how this methodology is aligned with my topic of interest. Within action research, I identified the approaches of action science and HPR as being particularly appropriate for my study. Additionally, because of my interest in story, I discussed how I would leverage aspects of narrative inquiry in my research. In this chapter, I demonstrated how HPR, action science, and narrative inquiry are woven together in the study. Next, I will review the research outcomes.

Chapter 4: Research Outcomes

This chapter explicates the analysis of the research. The chapter begins with a portrait for each of the six participants, giving the reader some context into the six leaders and their main lines of inquiry. Next I will explore how the findings illuminated the research questions.

Participant Portraits

Ruth's portrait. Ruth was one of my earliest research participants. Ruth was part of a leadership development program that I led that had ended just prior to the research, and I believe that part of what motivated her was to continue our work together. She had two topics that she was interested in exploring: one related to stories that she told herself about her employees and the other concerned how she showed up in her career. After going through the orientation, we agreed to explore the later.

As with all the participants, I knew Ruth outside the research process. Similar to Carl, Ruth and I had occasionally had deep conversations tangentially related to work. I was aware of interests and skills that Ruth brought to her role that were outside of the corporate mainstream (e.g., meditation and hypnosis). This gave me confidence in Ruth's ability to embrace some of the more esoteric tools within my research.

Ruth and I worked together over a period of 2 months. We held one of our conversations in person and two via Skype. The techniques that Ruth and I focused on beyond the orientation were StrengthFinders, identifying an affirmation, and using a technique to get grounded.

Ruth manages a team of call center agents in a financial services company. She has received positive feedback about her performance and recently participated in a development program for high performing managers. Ruth is ambitious and would like to

move beyond her current role. However, she recently received a peer survey suggesting that she is not seen as a role model leader. These findings served as an undercurrent as Ruth and I explored how she “shows up” in her career. A number of themes came up in our work together related to Ruth’s desire to move up, including (a) a tendency to “cocoon” or stay within her comfort zone, (b) a struggle with perfectionism, and (c) a need to change the perceptions of others. Ruth and I also explored her role as a people leader, in which she finds herself coaching her employees in similar areas (e.g., perfectionism and a concern for the perceptions of others).

Ruth’s organization uses a tool called StrengthFinders to help employees understand how certain attributes show up in personal interactions. One of Ruth’s strengths is called “Relator.” This strength refers to the nature of relationships that the individual builds. When appropriately used, the Relator strength is characterized by being a great friend who is forgiving, generous, caring and trustful. However, strengths can be over-used, a condition that Gallup (2007; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) terms *being in the basement*. The Relator theme, when in the basement, is characterized by living in a clique, cronyism, having an inner circle, and playing favorites. This terminology will be helpful in understanding the dialogues that I held with Ruth.

As a Relator, Ruth’s comfort zone is circumscribed by those with whom she feels close while she tends to keep others distant. When Ruth is cocooning, she is in the basement (demonstrating the shadow side of her Relator quality). Ruth came to the realization that this tendency to cocoon is the primary reason she sometimes does not show up. In other words, Ruth takes on a low profile so as to become almost invisible.

During our work together, the primary way that Ruth challenged herself in the area of showing up was by posting for two jobs. By posting outside her traditional area of

comfort she deliberately broke away from the cocooning behavior. Prior to our work together, Ruth had a very narrow perspective on what type of work suited her and had restricted her job search to one specific job. Ruth described the shift in her thinking that took place: “knowing that one of my talents is thought and analysis . . . You know what? I challenge myself now when different opportunities and things come out to look at them. I took a baby step, posted for something.”

Ruth is taking a new approach toward these postings. Going through the process is the ultimate goal of her posting, not necessarily securing the job. “Here’s where I haven’t made the job so much important to me as the process of how I look at this and what drives me inside to do it. . . “ Ruth explained. “I don’t have to be perfect. Even in my interview, what I really want to get across is who I am and how I do things. It was an interesting process. Less stress, but not less work.” From this expanded perspective, Ruth has realized success, giving herself credit for even posting in the first place and the way she showed up in the interview. “I analyze it in a healthier perspective of, ‘wow, I don’t think 2 years ago I would have just been able to have the interview that I had,’” Ruth explained.

Ruth further stepped out of her comfort zone with the second posting by asking to meet with the VP to discuss his thoughts about Ruth in the role:

I asked to meet with [the VP] and get his idea, the vision on it and just grounded myself . . . in that meeting. I felt like it was a good confident way to display how I’m doing . . . learn about how he sees [the role] and how I see the parts of me that could do well in it.

Ruth further explained:

but you’ve got to manage that perception for them to be able to see you in that type of role. It was good and I looked at it all, not at the end but as the process I almost shut off and didn’t post.

Just posting was a victory for Ruth, representing her ability to move past the stories that she was telling herself to potentially create a future of expanded possibilities.

Ruth elaborated,

I thought, “what’s driving this [the reluctance to post]”? It’s all that discomfort with doing that and I feel like I share this with you because those are the things that end up being the barrier that holds you back. I pushed through them and I challenge myself on that, on the story I was telling myself at that moment and how I see myself and how to help others see what I could do.

During our time together, Ruth did not make progress beyond the initial interviews. Depending on the reasons driving the organization’s decision-making, this could be example of the organization suppressing minority voices. (I use *minority* here to refer to opinions that differ from the norm). Hiring is an excellent mechanism for ensuring a diversity of voices will be heard within the organization. But for Ruth, it was the posting process (not the outcome) that was most important. Ruth’s success with stepping out of her cocoon and exploring new career possibilities was facilitated by progress that she made in dealing with her perfectionism and with her over-concern for other peoples’ perceptions. When Ruth believes that she has made a misstep her perfectionism manifests itself as being very self-critical and engaging in negative self-talk. For example, this shows up in the interviewing process as analysis that grows increasingly judgmental with time. As Ruth explained:

As the day goes on, you start to think about and dissect all the things that you did. Did I really say that? Was there this in that moment? I think I skew and I go much further to where my own personal conclusion, and part of that is good Other [stories] are just my own nerves and criticism coming in.

By focusing on self-awareness, Ruth made progress with the perfectionism. Ruth focused on her feelings, which she realized are the precursors to the negative thinking.

She could then circumvent with more generative stories:

I gave myself permission to just be who I am. You know what I mean? I don't have to feel bad because I wasn't perfect. . . . I didn't realize there was so much self-abuse and punishment going on and it carries into everything else that you do. . . . That was the big aha.

From a managing the perceptions of others perspective, Ruth recognized that she would need to be proactive in the job search process.

I knew that it would take a lot of head turns [from] some of the managers to see that I am interested in some other things. I already know a lot of the people so it won't be so much about getting to know them but for them to see me and my abilities in other ways.

The process of selecting a candidate to fill a vacancy has a hermeneutic quality to it. Behavioral Based interviewing, for example, explicitly operates under the theory that by understanding a person's past actions, we can make reliable predictions about how they will behave in the future. The savvy candidate, then, chooses responses that reveal something worthwhile about his past, but more importantly, through his responses he attempts to open himself to future possibilities that align with the interviewer's expectations. The challenge for the job candidate is that he may not know much about the interviewer's foreground (their preconceptions and prejudices). The situation that Ruth faces as a member of the organization is that her interviewer's foreground will contain information about Ruth from outside the interview. From this standpoint, it makes sense for Ruth to go to interviews to gather insight into how she is being seen, with her intent focused more on how she comes across broadly as a candidate. In this way, Ruth may be able to collect data that she can use to prepare herself for some future opening. Understanding that every potential hiring manager will be grounded in preconceptions about each candidate, allows a candidate like Ruth to proactively manage her stories with hiring managers. In the event that the interviewer does not initially see Ruth as a good fit for the role, Ruth must evoke a fusion of horizons. As Habermas (1989) explained:

For both parties the interpretive task consists in incorporating the other's interpretation of the situation into one's own in such a way that in the revised version "his" external world and "my" external world can --against the background of "our" lifeworld--be relativized in relation to "the" world, and the divergent situation definitions can be brought to coincide sufficiently. (p. 155)

One of the aims of the research was to see if leaders could help others' craft more generative stories that support an environment of thriving. Ruth and I explored this by focusing on an employee who was, similar to Ruth, exhibiting a perfectionist tendency. As a call center agent, this employee's trait showed up on calls. If one call did not go well, there was a risk of the agent struggling with subsequent calls due to self-criticism. Ruth and I talked about how the agent could catch and correct this behavior. We related the discussion back to a dialogue that we'd had about Ruth's tendency to close herself off. Since we are both familiar with the work of Buckingham and Clifton (2001) I used a metaphor from his work. The metaphor provided a shared language through which we tried to evoke change. As Herda (1999) explained:

When we do make use of our ability to create and accept, or decline, obligations, we are more fully using language as it has the potential to be used. When we understand language in this ontological sense, our work in applied hermeneutic research can help to shape a context in which we can change. In this same context, others can change, and new understandings and new insights into our social problems can emerge. (p. 25)

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) theorized that our strengths can become liabilities if overused. Buckingham and Clifton described the downside of our strengths as being in the basement. Ruth and I had been using the phrase *being in the basement* as a shorthand for when Ruth began over-relying on one of her strengths. Likewise, as we discussed the issues encountered by the phone agent, I asked Ruth if triggers could be used to identify the moment that the agent 'puts her hand on the basement door knob'. Regarding metaphor, Ricoeur (1991) stated, "It is in the moment of the emergence of a new meaning

from the ruins of literal predication that imagination offers its specific mediation” (p. 124). In our conversations, *in the basement* and *putting your hand on the door knob* proved to be useful shared language that moved our exploration forward.

We were more successful in helping Ruth recognize her triggers than in helping her employee. For Ruth, she could recognize a shift in feeling that would lead her to ask what she was thinking. She generally was easily able to identify the thought behind the feeling and could abort the train of thought. When Ruth spoke about ‘cocooning’ she was identifying ‘basement’ behavior. Ruth has a strength that Buckingham and Clifton (2001) term Relator. People with this strength tend to have close-knit circles of relationships. Sharing is easy with this group and loyalty is important. A Relator on the balcony is a great friend to have: dependable and intimate. In the basement, however, the Relator can become cliquish and distant to others. This might suggest that unless she is on the balcony, Ruth might have trouble engaging in the level of sharing required by this research. However, I found it easy to work with Ruth; she was enthusiastic about our explorations and not hesitant to engage in self-disclosure. This could also potentially be explained by our relationship: I am like a mentor to Ruth. It may be that she includes me in her close circle and therefore I may experience Ruth differently than would someone outside her circle. Nonetheless, my experience of Ruth was that she was very willing to put her beliefs at play. As Porter and Robinson (2011) explained, “play and dialogue require our openness in terms of vulnerability and risk. To encounter another person’s horizon through dialogue is to allow our own horizon to be potentially changed” (Chapter 4, Section 8, para. 3).

Carl’s portrait. Carl was one of my first research participants, so the process was a new adventure for both of us. My relationship with Carl had been intermittent, but

characterized by an occasional deep conversation. In these conversations, Carl had demonstrated an interest in topics well outside the corporate mainstream. I knew that one of his favorite books was *Theory U* by Otto Scharmer, work that I also admire and reference in this dissertation. I was fairly certain that Carl would be an enthusiastic participant in my study. When I approached Carl, he was very interested in my work and wanted to be a participant. It was a coincidence that the timing worked out so nicely: Carl was going through a sort of crisis at work and was able to work out that situation through the research process.

Carl and I met over a period of 2 months. Our conversations were all held using the Skype technology. For Carl, the critical tool seemed to be the 13-page Participant Guidebook (see Appendix A) that I developed to orient participants and the theory presented therein.

Carl is a manager of several teams of account service agents at a technology company. He was a particularly enthusiastic participant in the research, commenting how compatible sensecrafting is to practices that he already utilizes. Carl's own practices include meditating, automatic writing, and clearing his mind to ask for intuitive guidance from his higher self.

During our first conversation, Carl raised concerns that he had been having working with his boss, Al. Al is a numbers-driven person and, in Carl's words, the polar opposite of Carl. Still, initially he had been optimistic about the relationship, believing "we can do some phenomenal things together, working together, and meeting each other half way and understanding each other's differences in the way we think." Instead, the relationship had been a disappointment to Carl. He felt that Al failed to try to "meet him

half way.” In fact, Carl was so frustrated that he was making plans to leave the company, ending a nearly 20-year career with that institution.

Carl’s initial area of focus was on his relationship with Al. He had two interrelated concerns: (a) Al is a data driven manager and (b) Al was not properly assessing Carl’s managers whose roles differs somewhat from the average supervisor’s. Carl and Al had had many conversations about the appropriate way to evaluate his team, but Carl ended up with the feeling, “I assume that [Al] was implying he knew my people better than I did, which frustrated me to no end.” Furthermore, the only way that Al seemed to want to communicate was through the data, and this was a weak point for Carl. In our first meeting, Carl expressed his frustration with the situation, stating.

. . . that story about him not being willing to meet me has kind of evolved to where, you know, from an organization standpoint, telling myself a story that I’m disappointed [in] the organization that they allow somebody of that ilk or train of thought to manage on the people side of the business.

Carl experienced quite a shift in his relationship with Al, and even the company, after our first session. First, he challenged his assumptions and stories, which increased his level engagement. He reported enthusiastically in our second conversation:

It was just like I told myself the story [that it] was so bad that I’m out [of the company]. Really, in retrospect and based upon some of the concepts that we talked about and the work you are doing . . . It’s not what the situation is. It’s what you tell yourself about the situation, which that’s empowering itself because nobody has control over it but you.

Carl had another breakthrough in his own behavior. He found that as he changed the stories he was telling himself, and the underlying assumptions he held, he had a desire to challenge more assumptions. Carl decided to start providing information to Al in a more data-driven way and took it upon himself to learn spreadsheets. Carl explained the improvement in his relationship with Al:

The story I was telling myself is, he wasn't willing to meet me half way. That's just rife with limits. In contrast, the story that I'm telling myself now is empowering from the standpoint of, I look to him, my interactions with him, what he brings to the table was different than what I do. His talents and strengths, his data analysis, his data driven decision making . . .

Carl and I delved deeper into how he used the techniques of sensecrafting to shift his stories about AI. Carl gained a lot of benefit by simply becoming aware of stories. This openness led to emergence, a concept from one of his favorite books—Scharmer's (2007) *Theory U*. "I think what happens is as you start being deliberate in your thinking and the stories you tell yourself about the way things are, things just come to you, like concepts and ideas," Carl explained. Part of the process involves asking yourself a lot of questions. For example,

Is there a different thought? I had a different thought about my place at Company X, the role that I play, that could make it better. It's almost like curiousness about how can I make things better by simply having a different thought about it.

Moving from frustration to curiousness seemed to herald a wider awakening for Carl:

My next thing is changing the stories . . . I had conceptually the idea that I could do this [sensecrafting], but I didn't have the context. I didn't have the structure, so when we talked and I saw the [participant guide book], I was like, duh, . . . I can change. It's the perfect workshop for me to work on me. It was awesome.

Carl's experiences with AI went beyond storytelling. When Carl altered his stories and his own actions, AI's behavior changed too. In a discussion of talent with several managers, AI took Carl's side, explaining to Carl's peers:

You know, I think unless you [share Carl's responsibilities], you don't understand how much work goes into preparing those employees." Carl was taken off guard, thinking, 'Who are you?' Just that quickly I realized how I interacted with him [AI] very much determines how he receives my meaning.

Carl was very enthusiastic about spreading the concepts of sensecrafting to other leaders, but he was a bit reluctant around some of the language and techniques being a good fit for a corporate environment. Carl reviewed some of the concepts with his team

managers and referred back to the approach when a difficult situation arose in the team. He found that applying the principles in a contextual setting was helpful to his managers' embracing the concepts. Carl described his experience in taking his managers through the process.

They don't see the potential is to change the thoughts about the way things are. If you can get them to do that on a small scale that's not scary, not a lot of ramifications about it, just that something very simple, and they see it done and it's like, holy cow. Then you get traction, then they start and it's like they see it as a benefit and a tool, and then they start expanding how it's used.

He further expounded:

If somebody is struggling with the concept or fully bought into what the potential behind it is, once they experience it, and they see the tangible benefit and it's not always tangible. Sometimes it's just like you have a completely different interactions Once they experience that, they are like, "Oh my gosh, this is, like, life changing."

Despite the benefits, according to Carl there are risks and challenges to introducing sensecrafting methods in a corporate environment. He attributed his own successes with sensecrafting to what had been for him pre-existing practices: meditation, clearing the mind, asking for guidance from his higher self. "Those kinds of things [meditation/asking for guidance] I kind of shy away from, talking about to . . . managers," Carl explained. "I don't know why, but, you know, it's not your normal coaching technique you would use in a corporate environment."

From a hermeneutic perspective, Carl seems to have engaged in what Ricoeur (1984) terms Mimesis3. "[Mimesis3] is an intersection of the text and the reader and creates an imaginary world we might inhabit. If we cannot imagine how our organizations could improve, we can never live in a world different from the current conditions," (Herda, 1999, p. 77). Carl succeeded in creating a world different from the current conditions by changing his story about AI. When Carl stopped worrying about

whether or not Al was ‘meeting him half way’ it opened a new possibility for different behavior from Carl. Together Carl’s thoughts and behavior invoked a better world that he had imagined. Herda stated:

just as narrative identity gives us the possibility “to compose several plots on the subject of the same incidents (which, then, should not really be called the same events), so it is always possible to weave different, even opposed, plots about our lives” ([Ricoeur, 1988,] p. 148). (p. 4)

This quality of hermeneutics is the heart of sensecrafting and Carl’s ability to weave different plots demonstrates that as an individual, he is a powerful sensecrafter.

Herda (1999) cited Gadamer’s explication of the notion of horizons to describe the expanding possibilities available to a person as he or she develops openness:

What we see, how we act, and how we reason all determine the extent and limit of our understanding. Gadamer (1988, p. 269) uses the image of a horizon to express the limitations and potentials of our understanding. He writes, “the horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him.” Gadamer continues to explained that when our horizons change our understanding changes. Although our horizons are open, they are also finite. It is up to us to change our horizons—the burden for understanding is on each of us. (p. 4)

Carl’s success in changing his thoughts and experiences demonstrates a broadening of his horizons. Carl’s demonstration of sensecrafting also suggests what Herda (1999) termed maturity:

A full and mature sense of self does not stem from a developmental process grounded in individualism but instead arises from a recognition that in one’s relationship with others there resides the possibility of seeing and understanding the world, and therefore one’s self, differently. When I change, the rest of the world changes. (p. 7)

Carl’s achievement involved not only a change in his thoughts, but also in his behavior toward Al. As Carl made an effort to approach his communications in a manner convenient for Al, the relationship improved and so did Carl’s reality.

Michael's portrait. Michael seemed to be motivated to participate in the study by a natural curiosity about self-improvement programs. Michael has a variety of topics that he was interested in exploring, all related to his work. This included how he had structured his compensation at the company, the nature of his role and his company's efforts to obtain funding.

Michael and I worked together over a period of 2 months. All of our conversations took place over Skype. Michael and I focused on tools such as the Left-Handed Column and tolerating ambiguity. Michael also shared with me a process that he uses where he writes down how he envisions things will go at his company.

Michael is the chief operating officer of an investment firm. His company is a small entrepreneurial concern and Michael's initial role in the organization was to provide the funding and to offer coaching and guidance to the firm's CEO. In our conversations, Michael chose to focus on his company; he has been there a little over 1 year. Michael spoke at length about some frustrations he's been experiencing there. He mentioned some initial dissatisfaction with his percentage of ownership with the firm, but seems to have resigned himself to the current allocation. A bigger concern that emerged for Michael is his unhappiness with his current role, and, more specifically, the fact that his current role does not allow him to engage in trading.

As I began to work with Michael, I worried a bit about the framing he was bringing with him. For over 10 years, he has participated in a personal development program that covers similar ground to that of sensecrafting. While the practices seemed complimentary, I was unsure whether Michael would truly be open to trying new things. Michael described his take on the situation:

I'm looking at your stuff and . . . I'm thinking, "Huh! It looks like another slice of the same pizza and I haven't had this kind of slice before. Maybe I'm going to learn something, see a different way that will make better in the process. I'll actually get better at it. Have another way to explained something or see something I don't see that's been missing."

After our first session, Michael agreed to try the Left Hand Column and he also volunteered to show me some stories that he had written as part of his regular practice. Deliberately creating stories is already well known to Michael. He uses the technique on very significant areas of his life. He described the practice as follows:

Before I join any organization, what I do is I write down all the stories I have about it before I go into it . . . I read it over and then I rip it up and then I write down how I say it's going to go. Then every day I read how I say it's going to go. I create who I'm working with, each person who I'm working with, I create what we're up to, I create who I am.

The new story is always written as a one-pager because Michael reads it every day. Michael has been extremely successful in his career and he wholly attributes his success to processes such as his one page story.

Michael agreed to try the Left Hand Column and saw some success with using it. "I felt more connected with my [business] partner," Michael reported. There was also a residual effect in sharing his one page story. "I've seen a big difference just from sharing my write-ups with you," Michael stated. "It has made me more accountable. I started thinking about my write-ups more often. There's this game of business I like playing when it works for me. Now I've become more serious about the commitments I've made."

It was not until our third session that Michael raised the issue that seemed to concern him the most. The head analyst had been on vacation the previous week, affording Michael the opportunity to suspend his regular responsibilities and cover for the analyst on the trading floor. "It was just my partner, Kyle and I," Michael explained.

We sat next to each other [trading] the whole week. It was phenomenal. The analyst's back today. It's like a whole different kind of company for me. Definitely not as happy with this arrangement as I am if I'm sitting with my partner at the markets and getting things done.

Michael's role in the company is evidently a major source of frustration, even anger, for him.

Separation of duties requires that someone be responsible for risk management, compliance, etc., which are under Michael's domain as chief operating officer. The person in those roles cannot also be a trader. The irony is that Michael wanted to get involved in his own investment firm in order to learn more about trading and now that activity is largely barred for him. "I love the company, and I love the role that I feel like I should have had, but I don't really have it," Michael explained. Expounding, Michael stated:

I'd like to trade. I have enjoyed my week last week immensely. Instead of trading, now I'm talking to lawyers, regulators, marketers, selling a concept, which I can do and do really well, but I'm not doing it at the exceptional level I could do it.

The frustration around this situation was extremely high for Michael.

Unfortunately, this particular frustration was not raised until our final session, so, within the context of the research, I could not give Michael sensecrafting techniques for follow up later. I did, however, pose the question, "What would you be willing to give up to be a trader?" Michael remained silent for a long time before replying:

It's very telling for me that I don't have an answer, which is probably why I am where I'm at because I don't want to give up anything to have it. I just want to have it. I don't have an answer for you.

When asked what he would be willing to give up to keep his commitment with his business partner, Michael responded, "I'm willing to give up trading." So despite the frustration and disappointment, Michael seemed clear about his path. His upset, however,

remained visceral. “It’s an improvement,” Michael said referring to the culture of his firm compared to others.

I wanted a big chunk of this. Having seen the road, it’s a big improvement. Maybe I should just settle to that, that I am going to make millions of dollars, and I am the boss, ultimately, so what the hell should I care? I know that’s not sufficient. What I end up doing is I end up looking for trading ideas outside of work, and I’ve found some. I have this fantasy that I’ll make so much money with those other trading ideas that I can then just go into trading. That’s not going to happen either, though, but that’s the fantasy I create now to deal with it. Anyway, that’s where we’re at, though I’m not willing to do anything about it right now, and I know it, so I just gain weight.

We were not able to generate any breakthroughs for Michael concerning his role frustration in our final conversation. Michael reported, nonetheless, that the process was helpful and had opened him up to new areas requiring consideration in his work life.

When Michael reflected on our dialogues and the sensecrafting process, he reported:

It got me thinking in different ways about the problems I’m facing. I always like that . . . it’s opened up something for me that I know I’ve got to deal with now, maybe sooner rather than later, which I think ultimately is a good thing.

We further discussed how leaders can use sensecrafting with their employees. Michael offered his perspective:

I think leaders can help others by talking to the people they work with about their stories, about how they see stuff, and just getting in their world and understanding where they’re coming from. I think that goes a long way. I think the other thing, too, is for leaders to share their story and really have that be real to them. Like the possibility of success is there. I think that makes a big difference. If you can see a path to success that makes all the difference, because there has to be some pathway, something you know that will get you there.

Michael’s emphasis on stories and the sharing of them is clearly aligned with sensecrafting. Michael’s process of developing a one-page story about his organization is reminiscent of Ricoeur’s three types of Mimesis. Mimesis1, (“What we walk into when entering an organization,” Herda, 1999, p. 78) and Mimesis2, (“How make sense of our present organizational life,” Herda, 1999, p. 78), taken together are analogous to

Michael's first step, which is to describe the organization that he is entering. Michael then tears up this description and writes down his one page document of, in his words, "How I say it is going to go." In this process, he says that he creates who he will be in the organization, and perhaps, more extraordinarily, who others in the organization will be. This aligns with Mimesis³ wherein the individual "creates an imaginary world we might inhabit," (Herda, 1999, p. 77).

The initial creation of the possibility of the company clearly is the product of having an open horizon:

Yet to understand at all we must be open to something more - something other than ourselves. It requires, for Gadamer, an openness to a question and a question's horizons in which we put ourselves at risk. Authentic experience shakes us awake and opens our eyes to the new and unexpected, that which is beyond our personal horizon. (Porter & Robinson, 2011, Chapter 4, Section 7, para. 10)

However, what I wondered about in working with Michael was whether he remained open to creating beyond the initial generation of the one page document. When I probed Michael about it, he said he was constantly revising the one pager and that this was part of the work. "If I don't [revise it regularly] then it'll be totally ordinary and it'll fail. . . . You have to . . . that's the effort."

Nonetheless, I had the feeling that somehow a revisiting and challenging of assumptions was absent in Michael's process. Due to this absence, a thoughtful revisioning of Michael's story seemed closed off from him. According to Moules (2002):

[Truth] occurs in keeping something open, in not thinking that something is known, for when we think we already know, we stop paying attention to what comes to meet us. The sign of something being true is not that something is repeatable, but that it lasts, lingers, and even changes. (p. 11)

In fact, some other possibility than what Michael had envisioned had crept up in the gaps of his story (his role frustration) and his story seemed to have no answer for it.

Moules (2002) described what may be missing for Michael: the unknown. While Michael took responsibility for this development, in many of his words he seemed hopelessly resigned to accepting a reality that he did not want: that he could not trade despite the fact that he had helped create this company in order to get back into trading. Since Michael was unwilling, or unable, to approach his partner about this situation, this became an example of minority opinions being suppressed

Michael might have benefited from suspending, or foregrounding. According to Gadamer (1960/2004) “Foregrounding (abheben) a prejudice clearly requires suspending its validity for us. For as long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not consider it a judgment” (p. 299). The prejudice, or assumption, that Michael seems to be in the grip of is his idea that his one page process is both a requisite and almost an assurance that he will invoke the outcome that he describes. When Michael fails to achieve the results that he has designed, he talks about having failed to “enroll” others in his vision. What I did not hear him say (though it may have remained unarticulated) is that he explores assumptions. So, while Michael’s process seems complimentary to sensecrafting, in our work together, I found it incomplete. Indeed, Michael did acknowledge that our conversations had opened something up for him (the trading situation): “[our conversation has] opened up something for me that I know I’ve got to deal with now.”

Marion’s portrait. Marion came into the study with some awareness of the work that I was doing. As a result, Marion’s expectations were fairly high and I believe that she was primed for not only transformative change, but also for doing the hard work to get there.

In the beginning, Marion asked about two broad possible areas of exploration: a relationship with one other or more of a process orientation. Ultimately, she chose to focus on a process that centered on one other individual. Our work together lasted a period of 2 months and conversations took place over Skype. From a tool and technique perspective, we focused on using the Left Hand Column, envisioning and archetypes (see details in Appendix C).

Marion is a director at an online retailer. Recently, she took on a new role working in headquarters. Marion's previous role was as an operations leader in the field managing a department of customer service representatives. Marion was struggling with her new job in a few ways, including partnering with her former colleagues in the field, understanding the operating protocols in her new department, and accomplishing things with the speed to which she is accustomed.

One struggle relates to her new responsibilities. In her previous role, Marion was a customer of the headquarters services that she now provides. From her prior position she had many preconceptions, often negative, about her headquarters partners and how things were done there. She has brought those assumptions with her and while she is trying to be open-minded to the new experience, she frequently finds evidence that actually supports her negative assumptions. Marion shared a particular scenario where she is trying to get a policy changed and has run into several roadblocks. She attributes the problem, at least in part, to not understanding the protocols of her new organization, which she finds to be unnecessarily slow in making changes.

Another struggle has to do with being caught in a middle ground between her old responsibilities and her new responsibilities. There are many aspects to this. Part of the issue is the way that both her former teammates and her new colleagues are treating her.

Other issues center around the contrasts between the two departments, especially with regard to how things get done. In the course of our conversations, we came to think of her core challenge being the role she plays between her new and former groups. Marion described our key focus: “I could use this unique middle role to build connections between both groups or if I don’t manage it right, I risk not being a part of either group.” She later simplified the mission: “staying connected by building connections.” Marion will have to navigate the contrasts between the two departments to fulfill her mission.

Marion’s previous department members see her as someone to bring their problems and complaints to regarding headquarters-related issues, even though these are often outside the scope of Marion’s new responsibilities. She ends up feeling like their “personal punching bag.” This in-the-middle quality is especially troubling because Marion often relates more with the situation of her previous department and is finding it difficult to understand the rationale behind the protocols in her new group.

A final area of concern for Marion is getting things done in her new role. She has a particular project that she has been working on: trying to get a policy altered. She feels like she is getting resistance and is frustrated with how slowly things are moving. Marion has had numerous meetings with a colleague to learn and take the necessary steps to make the change, but feels she has made no progress and encounters endless obstacles. Although Marion’s motto in her previous department was “done is better than perfect,” she finds this does not apply in the new environment. However, she remains unclear about the new operating model.

In an effort to build connections and to understand the protocols of her new organization, Marion has sought to understand what is the commodity in the new department:

I know the commodity which [my old group] is just steeped in. It literally is [the] decisions that support them achieving their business results and they don't even really care much about some of the process and the protocol which is what my [new] organization has to maintain.

Marion has not been able to definitively identify her new group's commodity. She suspects that it relates to providing input on changes. Marion articulated it as "my value comes when you ask my input."

One of the tactics that Marion has employed in response is to attempt to understand the headquarters protocols. But here again, she has been met with resistance. When Marion makes comments or asks explicit questions, she says:

I'm finding it interesting how few even respond and many times I'm asking for help like "This is where I see an opportunity: where can I get educated on it? Can you weigh in? Am I on track? Do you see things this way?" [There's] just very little feedback at all, even to say "that's completely off track."

In general, Marion finds that the timing, frequency and even mode of communication is different in her new group, further stymieing her efforts. Marion's challenges in understanding the headquarters protocols have the unfortunate consequence of silencing her voice. This is an example organization's suppressing minority voices. This practice is potentially devastating to the organization because it losses the opportunity to hear from all of its members

Further along in our conversations, Marion was able to identify two additional challenges. One is the politics of her new organization. While all groups have politics, the nature of politics in the headquarters organization was another aspect that Marion has found a bit perplexing. In support of her perspective, one of the headquarters vice presidents commented to Marion that going to a key staff meeting was like having a ringside seat at the "Game of Thrones," the violent book and television drama that follows events amongst medieval royalty.

Another area that surfaced for Marion was following the rules. While she considers herself a rule-follower, she also has embraced the mentality of “done is better than perfect.” This motto assumes that someone is looking for perfection, and Marion now finds herself planted in a group that seems to see its mission as achieving that perfection. Both organizations trade in decision-making, and while the field values quick, practical decisions, headquarters seems to favor deliberate, bulletproof decisions. Marion has found herself firmly in the middle of the two philosophies: part of the new deliberate world, but holding vestiges of the value system of the old world.

Marion brought a great deal of self-reflection to the research process. She was very self-aware and humble and as a result, readily took accountability for what she owned; for example, she easily recognized where she was holding assumptions that were not helpful.

I’m finding that the less certain I am in my workspace, the more I am struggling with assumptions and storytelling. I would have said in my previous role, I maybe had more success managing assumptions. Maybe that was just my perception but I felt like that. But here, in the absence of knowing, I think I’m doing more around assumptions to fill those blanks. It’s the worst-case scenario, right? I mean, when you’re in a new space, building new relationships and a new role, the whole purpose of that experience is to be open and have a different level of mindfulness because you’re not going on rote patterns.

Perhaps the hardest part for Marion is that her old assumptions about headquarters seem to be validated by her new experiences. Marion explained:

In this [new] role, I am finding that I do have some interesting sets of belief from the place I come from, so moving into a part of the organization that not only have I never worked in, [but that] I have been a primary customer of, lends to lots of beliefs.

She goes on to report:

Some of the framing that I have about headquarters’ people, I feel like it’s getting reinforced now that I’m in it. I hear lots of things [from the new group], like “we can’t go from zero to 100 overnight. Things can’t happen that fast. We’re still

trying to get the foundation designed. You're really talking about execution already," a lot of that stuff, which is reinforcing some of those stories in my head.

Together Marion and I made good progress in identifying the root of her frustrations and the role she was playing in bringing negative assumptions to the situation. "What I find humbling about the process you've asked me to explore is how much of that I'm bringing to the table," Marion acknowledged. However, Marion seemed to be caught up in the negative assumptions since they were continually reinforced, and in Marion's words, she could not determine how to effectively navigate protocols within her new organization. When we left off, Marion was determined to share her Left Hand Column work with the colleague with whom she was trying to effect a policy change. Marion's hope was that her own authenticity might open a new possibility with this individual.

I feel like [sharing is] what I need to do. There's a part of me that believes that if I can do it effectively, communicate it with authenticity, it actually will enrich the relationship as well as move the project forward. That's what I find this work can do . . .

Although she was hopeful about her next step, Marion remained frustrated by her new role at the conclusion of our research conversations. Marion was a relatively sophisticated participant in that I believe she entered the process seeking transformation; she knew that was a possibility, perhaps even her expectation of our work together. Marion readily recognized her prejudices but had difficulty suspending them. She was open to a new world of possibilities, yet at the same time failed to meet them. Looking at Marion's situation from a hermeneutic perspective, what Marion quested after but failed to grasp was transformed consciousness: as Holroyd (2007) explained, "The hermeneutic experience that Gadamer brings to attention is more than a simple accumulation of experiences: it is a *learning experience*. When individuals have a learning experience

they undergo a radical shift in their consciousness” (p. 8). Marion’s reflection stopped short of a learning experience that led to a shift in consciousness. Her frustration stemmed from her suspicion that such a transformation was possible.

It may be that despite Marion’s ease of acceptance of her assumptions, she was nonetheless constrained in terms of opening her horizons.

[Gadamer] writes, ‘the horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him’. Gadamer continues to explained that when our horizons change our understanding changes. Although our horizons are open, they are also finite. It is up to us to change our horizons—the burden for understanding is on each of us. (Herda, 1999, p. 4)

It is as if Marion understood the possibility of broadening horizons but was unable to open them, perhaps because she was evaluating her new department protocols through the lens of her old department’s value system. The credo, “done is better than perfect” dominated and cut off the possibility of the emergence of the new.

Despite having fallen short of a broadening of horizons or a shift in consciousness, Marion made progress in our work. According to Gadamer (1960/2004), “It is impossible to make ourselves aware of a prejudice while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, provoked” (p. 298). Whereas before our work, Marion’s assumptions were unnoticed, our conversations and the work that she did between sessions allowed her to see her prejudices. Marion made many statements like the following: “What I find humbling about the process you’ve asked me to explore is how much of that [assumptions about headquarters] I’m bringing to the table.” This is an important realization that sets the stage for the possibility of progress for “We now know what this requires, namely the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices” (p. 298).

Perhaps Marion could have benefited from tolerating ambiguity. As Habermas (1981) described:

A more realistic picture [concerning the presence of ambiguity] is that drawn by ethnomethodologists--of a diffuse, fragile, continuously revised and only momentarily successful communication in which participants rely on problematic and unclarified presuppositions and feel their way from one occasional commonality to the next. (pp. 100-101)

Taking this position toward the frustrations with her new group's protocol might have helped Marion to achieve the open space that she needed to come to understand headquarters' on its own merit, standing apart from the judgments that Marion carried about the department moving too slow. Suspending an idea of the appropriate speed may have opened the room to understand the speed with which headquarters operated at.

Marion undoubtedly had what Holroyd terms a hermeneutic 'experience':

Experience, in the hermeneutic sense, often arises from disappointment. It is often during our own disappointing experiences that we find ourselves in a world that no longer fits the customary order of things. This experience moves each of us to discover quite by accident that our beliefs about the phenomenon of concern were, at best, questionable. This becomes a trigger of sorts that motivates the individual to start to question his or her predominantly one-sided and highly subjective understanding of the phenomenon in question. During this questioning, it is not unusual for the individual to notice how inadequate his or her previous understandings were. (Holroyd, 2007, p. 9)

What remains frustrating for both Marion, and for myself as the researcher, is our failure to move past the questioning and on to some greater expanse, such as a broadening of horizons.

Josie's portrait. Josie had previous experience with academic research and I believe that her main motivations were an interest in the research process and a desire to help me. Josie had a number of changes happening at work, all of which made good topics for our exploration.

Josie and I worked together over a period of 6 weeks. All of our conversations were held using the Skype technology. We employed the techniques of the Ladder of Inference, journaling, and authoring (see Appendix C).

Josie is a middle-aged clinician working in mental health in a supervisory capacity at the county level. During our research together, Josie was on leave, recovering from a knee injury. She has been struggling to reconcile herself with issues at work, including changes in the workplace (an integration of services within the County and compliance with new laws) and her own fit with the values of the system. Josie finds dealing with these issues to be anxiety provoking. The anxiety frequently manifests as migraine headaches.

During our research conversations, Josie was weighing several issues. She was questioning her fit with organizational values, a question made more complex by the County's integration efforts. She worried about being out on Worker's Compensation and whether she might experience resentment from others or discrimination in the workplace. Josie characterized herself as being at crossroads, wondering if she should leave a job she had been at for nearly 10 years. Josie articulated her worries about the integration and her ultimate place in the organization as follows:

Do I feel like I can be part of that team and is the voice that's being spoken about how to organize the structure what I want? County tends to be pretty hierarchical, so some of what needs to go on is going to cross boundaries and people have to deal with their conceptions and preconceptions about other people.

Josie worries about how smoothly this forced integration will go. "It'll be interesting to see where things go because Mental Health doesn't play well with others." The pain for the departments is manifold, including the move to electronic records, new

procedures, and compliance with new law, including Jessica's Law and the Affordable Health Care Act. Josie explained:

Everybody has their own pressure around it, you know? . . . We were going to electronic records and we have to have certain kinds of records and you can only bill in certain ways. . . . [he County is capable of progressive action, like bringing in a consultant to look at spiritual issues; however, the administrators lack skill in change management.] And that's where it's sort of schizophrenic in the County. . . . It's like it does very progressive things, but there's a very big disconnect between management and the line staff. So it's top-down . . . It's not really pulling people in at the level that I was really hoping it would. [As the County is moving through the integration, the work is getting harder.] . . . The process is quite alienating. It's harder to do an eval[uation], it takes more time, there's more paperwork At the same time the expectations are being raised around looking at a broader view of clients. At the same token, the amount of activity you have to do has increased.

Another frustration for Josie comes from treatment of people, both employees and clients of the system. She worries that she might experience ageism and discrimination for her work-related injury. "There are ageism and then there are issues in our county about people who have Workers' Comp cases. . . . There's a lot of resentment around that." With regard to clients, the County presents a dual face: the sword and the helping hand. "I'm a bit worried about the way we get caught in criminalizing the mental health field and that whole stigma issue."

Josie experienced some relief through our work together with the sensecrafting process. According to Josie,

Sometimes what happens is it gets so overwhelming for me, I just split and I don't want to think about it anymore. Then I come back to it a little bit later thinking that I have more clarity where in fact I think staying in the mix and going back to these [sensecrafting] models helped me sort better and not avoid.

Staying with the process and not avoiding enabled Josie to be able to reach a new conclusion: "Okay, I do impact the system in a way I want to get my needs met." A strong indication that the process is working for Josie comes from her somatic reaction,

or lack thereof: “Historically. . . I would have gotten a migraine around some of these pressures that are going on right now. . . I have not.”

Josie embraced the sensecrafting process by working on a technique called *authoring*. Authoring explores two aspects: who is privileged to create meaning and whether the individual can deliberately create a story about what is happening that is more generative for them. I was inspired to create the authoring exercise by Narrative Analysis, which concerns itself with “questions of who gets to author the narrative emplotments of complex organizations and what other emplotments are feasible” (Boje, 2001, p. 10).

Josie found authoring to be a helpful way to consider her situation with regard to role fit. She was inspired to check in with work while she was on leave, and she felt the authoring process made the call more worthwhile than it otherwise would have been:

There’s an authoring process that’s going on [at the County] and in a period of change I wanted to be part of that authoring process. I saw the call differently and I constructed the conversation on the phone differently, and then I gleaned some information about what’s happening in the County that supports the fact that I could move into a role and make some suggestions about what a role could be for myself.

When it comes to the integration of departments, Josie feels that her background (she has worked in many of the various departments) leaves her in a position to be a strong collaborator. “I’m able to collaborate in ways and have continued to collaborate in ways that are a little informal, and now they’re having to be made more formal.” This presents an important opportunity for the County to hear from Josie. Josie clearly has a perspective on many topics, and is an experienced leader in her field. Further, she has a unique take on Affordable Care Act and could be of assistance in successful

implementation. Here again is an example of how an organization can embrace (or not) a minority voice

In going through the research process, Josie exhibited candor, openness, and the ability to challenge her own assumptions. At one point, she stated: “I’m thinking that I really need to use the Ladder of Inference because I saw conclusions, sometimes a little prematurely . . . I tend to personalize some.” Openness is a key sensecrafting skill and also important to hermeneutic research. Porter and Robinson (2011) explained, “Genuine understanding, for Gadamer, emerges when we begin to see what is questionable in new ways and open ourselves to a dialogue with the other, e.g., text, person, work of art,” (Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 1).

As part of the authoring process, Josie clarified both what she saw as the dominant storyline in the County:

This is a building time . . . the Mental Health program needs to change players to younger clinicians who provide more assertive action that quickly results in referral to . . . treatment, less direct services, and more policing and coding of process. Manager and select [Quality Improvement] folks make meaning for others based upon their analysis of State and Federal codes. Chief psychiatrist has some say around clinical process. Human Resources and Board prioritize services based upon affordability and as monies did not provide parity . . . [Mental Health] services neglected. Now new parity laws require services and hustle is on to show “good faith” effort to comply.

Josie articulated her own story as desiring: “[A] County based clinic that is consumer focused and aligned with Affordable Care Act. I am concerned about quality and quantity of care.” By working through the sensecrafting process, Josie was able to at least partially bridge the gap between the dominant story and her story:

I’m thinking about ways I could impact the way my Mental Health Director is filtering the way she’s seeing service delivery and that there could be a niche for me in that process that would meet my needs, both personally and professionally and would still be consistent with the way that County’s going. Still room for quality services in program and I have qualifications to move forward in doing

clinical work. I can take steps in county to address my goal of getting hours and increasing Knowledge base as well as finding a role in county and transition at my own pace.

Here we see openness in Josie, where she has come to question her own beliefs.

Holroyd (2007) offers some perspective as to what may be happening here: “Experience, in the hermeneutic sense, often arises from disappointment. It is often during our own disappointing experiences that we find ourselves in a world that no longer fits the customary order of things” (p. 9). We saw this play out in Josie questioning whether she should remain at the County. Holroyd continued:

This experience moves each of us to discover quite by accident that our beliefs about the phenomenon of concern were, at best, questionable. This becomes a trigger of sorts that motivates the individual to start to question his or her predominantly one-sided and highly subjective understanding of the phenomenon in question. During this questioning, it is not unusual for the individual to notice how inadequate his or her previous understandings were. (p. 9)

Josie’s ability to envision a more generative role for herself and for the Mental Health department suggest her ability to engage in what Ricoeur (1984) termed Mimesis3. Herda (1999) asserted:

Mimesis3 represents an act of reading in the relationship between time and narrative. It is an intersection of the text and the reader and creates an imaginary world we might inhabit. If we cannot imagine how our organizations could improve, we can never live in a world different from the current conditions. (p. 77)

The opening of possibility that Josie experienced is particularly exemplary in that Josie came to an expansion of horizons without actually interacting with her director (since Josie was on leave at the time of our research dialogues). Porter and Robinson (2011) further explicated the expansion of understanding:

To understand at all we must be open to something more - something other than ourselves. It requires, for Gadamer, openness to a question and a question’s horizons in which we put ourselves at risk. Authentic experience shakes us awake

and opens our eyes to the new and unexpected, that which is beyond our personal horizon. (Chapter 4, Section 6, para. 10)

According to Holroyd (2007), the type of realization that Josie came to through her openness is nothing short of transformational: “Simply stated, the inquirer is prepared to surrender, through a stance of openness, what he or she currently knows, and it is in this surrender that the inquirer has the potential to be transformed” (p. 3). From my observation of our conversations, Josie indeed underwent a transformation, from characterizing the County as a schizophrenic, siloed institution that criminalizes mental health to being a progressive place where she could possibly find alignment with her values and have a positive impact on her director. This is not to say that Josie no longer views the County as dysfunctional, but that she now sees a path toward being able to be personally have a positive influence in this setting and a longer term role.

Josie had used a metaphor to describe the Mental Health division: the sword and the helping hand. This referred to the ambiguity between the division’s purpose and ultimate actions. The ambiguity applied to both the poor and the mentally ill (and of course, the intersection of the two). “There is a sense of the un-deserving poor, you know? There’s a quality about the way people are treated that just is not what I’d call respectful and healthy,” Josie explained. Josie went on to describe the treatment of the mentally ill and the ambiguity of the County’s role:

. . . One of the archetypal fields . . . in the county is that of healer The other one that I’m working with, particularly in my unit, is . . . working with forensic clients. So the other archetype that is actually operative is really more a punitive, kind of a judging, more of a law and order [archetype] It’s really maintaining the status quo, punishing the criminals. In some sense it’s criminalizing behaviors from mentally ill clients.

This particular thread of conversation arose from an exercise that I had suggested regarding the archetypal fields at play in Josie’s workplace. Examining the archetypes led

to an interesting exploration of the metaphor of the Healer (the helping hand) and the Judge (the sword). Metaphor plays an important role in hermeneutic research:

As Geertz (1973: 210) points out, metaphor has ‘a stratification of meaning, in which an incongruity of sense on one level produces an influx of significance on another.’ People can attempt to make sense out of something that does not otherwise make sense and thus imbue it with new meanings. Or people can become disturbed by the incongruities of public policies and political facts, and their dissatisfaction can lead to conflict that could, in turn, result in evaluation and negotiation over alternative courses of action. (Herda, 1999, p. 30)

Josie’s facility with using archetypal metaphors made her a particularly expressive participant.

Ian’s portrait. As a fairly new vice president, Ian was motivated to look at aspects of his new organization and the process that he was going through to bring about change. Ian and I worked together for a period of 6 weeks. All of our meetings took place using the Skype technology. During our work together, we employed the techniques of envisioning, reflection, and narrative analysis.

Ian is a vice president running a call center for an insurance company. He had been in the role for less than a year at the time of our research conversations. Being new to his role, Ian has dedicated a lot of time and effort to establishing an organizational vision and driving the behaviors that support it. Ian naturally uses much of the repertoire of a sensecrafting leader: he seeks to craft messages that support the vision and that tell stories about those who have exhibited the values that he is trying to promote.

One of Ian’s first tasks is to work on the vision. The scope of Ian’s responsibilities has grown with his new role; he now has approximately 50 managers and supervisors reporting up into him. Part of the learning curve for Ian is how to navigate his new larger, more layered organization. Ian first turned his attention to the organizational vision, but

then had an important realization: “I started to create a vision even before I took the job,”

Ian explained

I put together some documents. I was really trying to frame my future thinking about the direction I want to take the business. Then you realize you can't do that directly. It has to be organically. Not everybody is thinking at the same level I'm thinking.

Now Ian is focused on a more organic, collective way to create the vision. He keeps asking the question of his leadership team, “What do we want to be known for?” Ian is also taking steps to plant seeds regarding the vision. “Secretly I've been creating a logo.” The logo is generic enough that his team will be able to help shape the details of the underlying vision. “I'm totally dropping off copies of this logo around the center with leaving it in places,” Ian said, explaining his approach to organically developing the departmental vision. Ian explained what he expects this vision to do: The vision will clarify “the things I'm serious about and I don't stop talking about them. That's where I'm headed in this idea of getting to people to believe. These are the things that I really care about and I want you to care about them too.”

In articulating what he most cares about, Ian explained that customer service is of primary importance:

I want to be known for, above all, is just serving our customers . . . We want people to know that we're going to go out of our way to resolve an issue. The buck stops here. Maybe I'm on the right path. It's just continue to execute to get people into that grove.

This quote reveals not only Ian's area of focus but also hints at the struggles that he is having getting his message across in terms of changing beliefs and behavior.

To get a clear sense of what Ian is trying to achieve and how he is going about it, I will first discuss some of the obstacles that Ian has to overcome. Then, I will present aspects of culture, including what he is driving toward and how he is trying to accomplish

it. Throughout, I will provide some examples of actions that Ian is taking to bring about organizational change.

As Ian is trying to drive cultural change, he finds himself confronting the vestiges of the old culture. For example, he felt that upon joining the organization there was not an open communication culture at play. Ian explained:

There's definitely this almost foamy layer where people are engaged but they're telling me what [they think] I want to hear . . . They're not really giving me the advice that it's going to take to improve the business. There's not a unilateral respect for each other, that we're a team, because of the forces that are at work where people believe . . . not only believe . . . but they know they're being ranked. Individually, they're ranked against each other.

It has been one of Ian's biggest accomplishments to penetrate this 'foamy layer' and to begin to change beliefs and behavior. The foamy layer is a good metaphor to describe the effect of current cultural forces and how they run counter to what Ian is trying to achieve. Other challenges that he has taken on include addressing salary inequity amongst supervisors, a misperception regarding ageism and clarifying the expectations for customer service.

As a venue for addressing issues such as those above and for talking about customer service and vision, Ian began a weekly meeting with his managers and supervisors. Ian laments that it has been a bit of struggle to orchestrate due to vestiges of the old culture. Struggles have included lack of participation at the meeting and a fear that expresses itself in reluctance to talk about the causes of poor performance. Nonetheless, Ian believes "it's really starting to build a communication culture among my leadership team." This is vital because Ian's initial impression of his leadership team was that "Our organization forgot how to compete for success, how to have a healthy competitive and collaborative drive . . ."

Initially, Ian says these meetings were characterized by silence. “The first two or three meetings they just sat back and listened. They were afraid to talk. I would ask people to contribute. [I received] very [few] comments . . . “ Ian carefully crafted these meetings through positive reinforcement, questions and storytelling. For example, in one early meeting, Ian explained:

A manager was apologizing publicly saying ‘we’re doing everything we can [to address poor results].’ I took that moment to talk about ‘we either all win or we don’t win. This is not a room where we have to apologize. This is a room of accountability but it’s also a room of strategy. Let’s talk about what we can do to help.’

Through these sorts of interactions, Ian is shaping the kind of communication that he wants to see at these meetings.

The views around the treatment of older employees may have been pre-existing but they were definitely aggravated by two incidents. First, Ian worked closely with his management team to terminate two employees who had been underperforming for years.

The perception I had from my leaders was they had been [low performers] for years and that the previous vice president really had difficulty with addressing it. I felt like this desperation on my managers’ part of ‘I can’t deal with these people anymore.’ We set out to take care of that situation and we did. They both had fairly quick departures out of the organization.

While Ian was pleased to make progress toward securing a leadership team that he felt could move the organization forward, this action backfired somewhat. “Well, what I didn’t realize was that they [the two terminated supervisors] were both older. Apparently that had created some kind of narrative for some of my more tenured, older leaders.” Secondly, Ian had assigned some team supervisors to special projects. These were vocal and ambitious employees who sought out the opportunities. However, they were also younger.

These two incidents lead to the unintentional creation of a narrative about age. Ian learned about the perception from an older employee, Maria, who told him: “the word on the street is that you want a young group. You want a young, energized group.” This news frustrated Ian. He explained, “I had almost mistakenly, without thinking it through, had created this perception that I was looking for a younger upbeat team supervisor staff.” Fortunately he had an opportunity to shift Maria’s perceptions. “[Maria] was struggling [in her performance] and then once I got a chance to work with her and she realized ‘no, he wants me to succeed.’ She told me that.” Ian characterized this as ‘winning her over.’

He later took the opportunity to explained parts of the story at a weekly leadership meeting.

At our meeting last week I took a moment to acknowledge all of Maria’s contributions to the team. She was in tears and it was a really powerful moment and she was very grateful. So I felt like there’s a moment where it was like a gift handed to me that I was able to find out that this was a perception and then have a situation where I could have an influence on it.

This is a representative example of how Ian uses his weekly leadership team meeting and storytelling to impart aspects of the culture that he is trying to build.

One of Ian’s goals is to change the nature of the stories being told. One story that he wanted to take on is the narrative around customer service.

There’s less of those stories about the nobility of just doing it because it’s the right thing to do and that we love to do it. Our storytelling is more wrapped up in scores and measurement. I think that takes some of the fun out of it. There’s no hero in that,” Ian lamented. Instead, Ian wanted to promote stories of heroic customer service:

When you get an upset customer that’s in a tough situation, that’s a gift for you to exert and show off and show us your ability. Those are the stories I want to herald

... the people that are brave and courageous and patient and calm under pressure.”

To encourage the kind of customer service that Ian wants to see from reps, he models an environment of sharing, mutual accountability and the attitude that ‘we all win together’. When a newer manager broke the silence in the weekly team meeting and described how she is struggling, Ian explained,

publicly I thanked her, just saying I appreciate you having the courage to bring that up here because there’s a lot of talent in this room. We all want to work together. We’re one team and this is non-judgment. This is about there is ownership and accountability but this isn’t a judging room.

This incident seemed to be one of the tipping points that Ian has been looking for, “Since then it has been great,” he added.

One of the cultural aspects that Ian is trying to drive is to create an environment of positivity and possibility. “I engage some pockets of team supervisors that I thought were vocal leaders to talk to them about ‘how do we create more of an air of positivity and possibility around here?’” Ian explained. One technique that Ian has used is to leverage the work of Rosamund and Benjamin Zander (2002). Zander and Zander have an exercise called “Give Yourself an A.” In this exercise, individuals write a letter, from the perspective of the future, describing what the individual did to achieve an “A” in the last month or quarter. The exercise opens the employee up to greater possibility and gets them focused on positivity.

Another aspect of storytelling important to Ian is the source of the story:

[I think] the power of not just me being the storyteller is really strong. I have a story that’s going to be coming soon so I look for these things to say ‘okay, this is important what we’re doing’ and it’s going to be a powerful situation. It’ll be a great moment to say this is isn’t just me blustering. This is how it works and this is the outcome we have and so I’m super excited. It’s like those are nuggets that are golden.

Evidenced by the previous quote, Ian deliberately crafts his stories. The stories are all real, but as particular situations begin to unfold, he often reflects on how these are good examples of the culture he is trying to drive.

An important issue for Ian is that his employees and supervisors see him and his leadership team as problem solvers, people who will clear obstacles for employees so that they may deliver superior customer service. He promotes this problem solving orientation at the weekly meetings. In the following example, Ian used a few skills to begin the process of opening communication at the weekly meetings. JoAnn, a particularly vocal coach [and someone Ian believes is an opinion leader) “tested me a few times by coming to my office and say[ing] I’ve got a bone to pick with you.” Ian managed to win JoAnn over by showing that he did want to hear about complaints and help to remove obstacles. Once he had established a good working rapport with her, he used this situation as an example at the weekly meetings:

She has taken it upon herself to be a vocal advocate. I’ve involved her and I’ve done that almost publicly . . . to say if you feel like you can come talk to me about anything, I want to hear about it especially if we’re doing something stupid then you can stop it.

Ian then took this one step further, suggesting that JoAnn could play a liaison role. He explained to the group:

I said, “If you’re not comfortable with that [bringing issues to me], just tell JoAnn. JoAnn can tell me.” JoAnn is just like, “I’m not afraid of him.” We’re in a group sitting with my coaches. I looked at JoAnn. I said, “Do I listen JoAnn?” and she said, “Yes, you do.” I said, “Do I act on the things that you talked to me about?” she said, “Yes, you do.”

At the end of our work together, Ian raised a valid point about sensecrafting.

“Here’s something I’m struggling with a little bit,” he began.

This practice and just looking through all the cards and just talking it through has really put me in context with what I believe I’m pretty good at but it’s one of

those skills that I don't articulate to people. I feel more like I'm orchestrating an event. I don't want to be overly intentional because it feels like it might not be as powerful to me.

As we talked through Ian's concerns, I suggested that perhaps his concern is with authenticity or genuineness. This resonated for Ian. Nonetheless, Ian's concerns raise a significant issue for sensecrafting work that I will explore more deeply in the section on Further Development.

Throughout Ian's portrait, we have seen the importance of storytelling as a mechanism to build culture. According to Ricoeur (1984):

A story describes a sequence of actions and experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people, whether real or imaginary. These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament, which calls for thought, action, or both. This response to the new situation leads the story toward its conclusion. (p. 150)

This would suggest that in order for Ian's stories to have the desired impact, they must be carefully selected and narrated in such a way that leads toward the desired thoughts and/or actions. For example, we saw the potentially dangerous consequences of a narrative that arose naturally, outside of Ian's control: his selection for coveted project roles of a few ambitious, energetic people who happened to be young led to an unintended narrative that Ian favors younger supervisors. When two older supervisors were terminated, this only gave strength to the accidental story. Ian had to take very deliberate action to first create the circumstances and then the story that could counter the ageism narrative that had arisen.

Ricoeur (1984) further asserted that people acquire their unique identities by telling and retelling what has been. In other words, the individual's narrative or personal history acts, as Herda (1999) described it, "to preserve the meaning that is behind us so

that we can have meaning before us” (p. 112). This establishes an important relationship between story, meaning and identity. Story is seen as a container of meaning. What is critical here is that it not so much the actual events that happened but rather those events as captured in story. By becoming an author of the story, the sensecrafting leader becomes privileged to create meaning for others. This is a powerful position to be in, and while Ian is a master storyteller, he also has the wisdom to realize the inherent risks: stories do not have to be true; they are susceptible to manipulation.

Ian described his misgivings with storytelling and the importance of doing so with integrity:

There’s an integrity component to it or something to ensure these stories are real. Let me say I think it’s probably equally effective, even maybe more effective, if the stories aren’t. I’m sure a lot of crafting takes place that’s more about just the power of starting some rumor.

Despite Ian’s recognition of the power of the manufactured story, he remained committed to using only authentic stories due to his concerns with integrity.

Herda (1999) pointed out, “For Heidegger, authentic understanding took place when a person came to acknowledge his own essence We can only experience others when we genuinely reflect upon who we are, what we do, and the implications of our actions” (p. 58). Ian’s concerns about authenticity itself led him into reflection. When he first brought up his struggle with authenticity, he had not named it as such. Rather, he said,

I feel like it’s an odd skill to try to teach someone the importance of it. It feels more like something like a principle that I would more keep to myself and just be known for it. I feel almost selfish about that than saying hey, here’s how you can be really powerful and teach you how to share your own story with others.

For Ian, being authentic comes in the shape of reconciling who he is as a leader (a strong storyteller and a natural sensecrafter) with skills he feels comfortable imparting to

others. Ian is admirable for his self-reflectiveness on this topic. While Ian demonstrates some of the most natural sensecrafting of any of the research participants I spoke to, this aspect about bringing in others, in an authentic way, may be an obstacle to Ian's being a complete sensecrafter. Recall that I define sensecrafting as deliberate, collective sensemaking. Ian's approach has an element of the collective: other people are almost always characters in the stories that he tells and other people sometimes tell the story. However, as Ian pointed out above, he is the one orchestrating the story. He has yet to turn over control for story orchestration to others. The role of other, and whether the other is privileged to create meaning, is something that Ian is still working through. For example, he had some misfires early on with opinion leaders, initially mis-identifying the true opinion leaders and working with those he perceived as vocal instead.

Beyond being a master storyteller, Ian excelled in his sensecrafting practice through his emphasis on learning. In fact, I suggested to Ian that it was a learning organization he was striving to create. Although Ian was unfamiliar with Senge's (1990) work, he agreed that based on my descriptions, he was indeed trying to create a learning organization. Ian's principle mechanism for driving the learning organization is the weekly meetings that he has established. In Ian's words, these meetings are creating a "communication culture." Ian described how the meetings work:

People that are having some success and they are humble about it. They'll say, "I'm doing this this month and it's working" and then other people will say "I did some struggling but here's how we're trying to approach." I started getting a lot of very positive feedback from team supervisors especially my team supervisors that weren't doing quite so well. We're creating a shared dialogue around our organization and a more honest dialogue I think around how we're really performing.

Ian went on to describe what he wants to accomplish at these meetings:

“If we want to be the best at achieving results and developing leaders then we have to commit to it and we have to take action around it and then before we leave I always ask each of them “what can I do to help. How can I clear the road?” and we do a lot of story time.

According to Herda (1999) “We learn by thinking differently and applying new understandings in our everyday lives” (p. 130). It was clear to me through our conversations that this is the kind of shift that Ian is trying to achieve.

In this section my intention has been to introduce each of the research participants as a person. In this way, I hoped to provide a portrait substantive enough to make research participants become real for the reader. To create the portraits, I pulled details from throughout the interviews and shared germane facts from what I know about each person. Of course, I had to walk a thin line here between sharing relevant facts, masking details, and providing enough information to offer sufficient context for each participant.

Analyzing the Findings through Answering the Research Questions

In the previous section, I covered in detail the six research participants and their chosen areas of inquiry. In the next section, I will answer the research questions, introduced in chapter 1. The main research question was: How can individuals develop their capacity for sensecrafting in order to cultivate a more generative relationship with the organizations to which they belong? The four secondary questions were:

1. What stories are individuals telling themselves about their organization and their role within it?
2. How do leaders relate to the other stories present within their organizations?
3. What stories do leaders craft in order to influence others in their organization?
4. How can leaders further develop the skill of sensecrafting?

These questions provide the lenses through which the data can be analyzed.

Regarding the first question, I will discuss how leaders can develop their sensecrafting

skills. To do so, I will explore two different areas. First I will examine the extent to which the six participants exhibited the nine properties of a sensecrafting leader. Following that, I will identify additional skills and themes that emerged in the research dialogues related to the secondary questions. Finally, I will share some of the benefits of sensecrafting that participants expressed.

My research intention was to explore whether by learning to express and/or embrace the nine traits of a sensecrafting leader, individuals will demonstrate and/or develop the skills of sensecrafting. Previously, I introduced my six research participants by writing a profile for each of them. I will now turn to each of the nine sensecrafting properties to explore whether and how each leader exemplified these traits. In some cases, leaders had a natural propensity towards the traits. In others, participants grew through the course of our research together, expanding their sensecrafting abilities. Not all properties were exhibited by each person. To answer the first question, I will look at participant data collected through the lens of my nine sensecrafting properties. First, it will be helpful to review the nine properties and their definitions:

- Learning Intention: A willingness to be flexible with one's mental models which creates an awareness that one's current mental models are just one out of many possibilities and that a richer understanding of the world can be gleaned if one has the courage to scrutinize and possibly revise one's dominant mental models.
- Tolerating Ambiguity: In dealing with apparent ambiguity, patience is needed. Rather than avoiding ambiguity or becoming paralyzed by apparent contradiction, ambiguity calls out for us to integrate and transcend.
- Discernment: relates to how we define our world, how we separate figure from ground. Discernment concerns nuance, the ability to draw subtle distinctions.
- Openness: is characterized by possibility, the unexpected, the new, the different. An open approach connotes receptivity to all the possible ways of approaching a situation.

- Framing: When we make meaning, we seek to stabilize the situation, to declare what it is that is going on. Once we bring that which is within our frame into focus, we are no longer attending to the process that we use to select the object of our attention. Once brought into focus, the object serves to anchor our awareness, providing the stability that humans crave.
- Mindfulness: is concerned with cultivating an awareness of where we are along the spectrum of Discernment/Openness. Mindfulness is about bringing to consciousness all the framing devices that constitute our capacity to discern.
- Envisioning: Palus and Horth (2002) explained, “The old rules were about following maps. The new rules are about making the maps-and often the compasses as well” (Chapter 2, Section 6, para. 1). Therefore, although looking forward to chart a course is still vital, the task may be much more difficult than previously experienced. Envisioning is more about entering into uncharted territory with some sense of the ultimate destination, but no map to chart the way.
- Action: Weick (1995) asserted that the bold action is adaptive, in contrast to deliberation, which he argued was “futile in a changing world where perceptions, by definition, can never be accurate. They can never be accurate because, by the time people notice and name something, it has become something else and no longer exists” (p. 60). Complicating things even more, the environment changes as the result of our action.
- Reflection: When reflecting, we look back upon our actions, see the new world that has been created by the addition of our action, and reconsider what all of this tells us about our mental models.

The following sections discuss each of the nine sensecrafting traits and examine the extent to which these traits were present in the research participants. For one to be a sensecrafting leader, it is necessary to demonstrate these traits at an interpersonal level (with one exception: mindfulness). In the analysis that follows, I discuss the evidence provided in our research conversations and then I make an assessment purely on the basis of those conversations. No instruments were used in these assessments. This purely represents my sense of the situation given the nature of our conversations. At the end of each subsection, I conclude by illustrating where I believe that each participant fell along

a sensecrafting spectrum: from “Not present” at one end to “Deploying the skill as a sensecrafting leader” at the other.

Learning intention. Exhibiting a learning intention in the context that I am using means being flexible with one’s mental models. Ian and Carl made frequent reference to both learning in the sense that I am using it and to learning in the classic sense. Carl, Ruth, and Josie all exhibited flexibility with their mental models, displaying the ability to work with their mental models on a personal level (see Figure 3). None of them, however, took their work to the interpersonal level required of the sensecrafting leader.

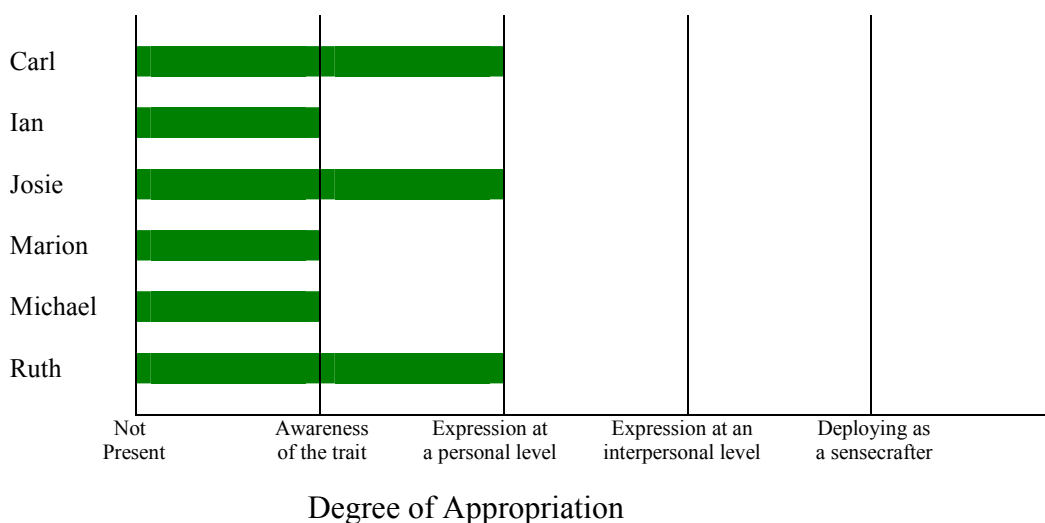


Figure 3. Learning intention characteristics demonstrated by participants.

Ian demonstrated an orientation toward learning at an organizational level. In fact, I came to believe that he was unwittingly creating a learning organization. Ian used language like “creating more honest dialogue,” “open dialogue,” and “work[ing] together to solve problems.” He engaged in practices like benchmarking to learn how another company is creating an open communication environment.

Ian was not aware of Senge's (1990) work, wherein he defined a learning organization as:

An organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. For such an organization, it is not enough merely to survive. "Survival learning" or what is more often termed "adaptive learning" is important—indeed it is necessary. But for a learning organization, "adaptive learning" must be joined by "generative learning," learning that enhances our capacity to create. (Chapter 1, Section 5, para. 5)

In trying to summarize what I was hearing Ian say, I referred to Senge's idea of the learning organization and Ian felt it was an appropriate description of the work he is attempting to do. Ian's weekly leadership meetings are one clear example of how he is trying to create a learning organization. Ian encourages people to talk about mistakes and struggles because learning takes precedence in these meetings. At the same time, Ian is trying to reframe competition, establishing a mindset around competing on execution on process improvement and service programs as opposed to competing on metrics, which is the current tendency.

Ian explained:

We celebrate when we're all succeeding. . . . This isn't about him versus her or anything like that . . . or this department versus that department. This is about us all feeling successful about the work we're doing, so we celebrate. We congratulate the teams that are doing well, but ultimately we share success. I said "This is a room where we have to work together to solve problems."

Besides the weekly meetings, another learning organization activity that Ian has undertaken is benchmarking. He visited another company where he found that they had implemented a dialogue similar to his weekly meeting, only this organization conducted their meetings on a daily basis. The theme of these meetings was "finding out if there's anything that people need help with or if there's any safety concerns, what had happened the previous day that they can solve for." This organization had a saying: "red is good,"

referring to the metrics on their scorecard. According to Ian, this meant, “you picked a challenging goal and two, there was something that we could fix. As a leadership team we could help.” Ian was considering adopting a similar philosophy amongst his group.

In his efforts to transform mindsets to those of the values of a learning organization, Ian engaged in sensecrafting behavior. He was trying to shift the shared meaning of success and to change the nature of public discourse to focus on problems that, if solved, can help everyone thrive.

For Carl, the learning intention manifested itself at a much more individualized and personal level. Carl applied it to learning the sensecrafting material. He explained:

I think it is, as you start employing [sensecrafting] and you start experiencing that, you kind of get the sense that you are a student, in that you are learning from it, but you are also a teacher because you are teaching yourself. You are learning it, but you are teaching yourself through your stories, and for me, that gives me, not comfort, but it kind of make sense because it's internal.

Carl's willingness to question his own thinking lead to dramatic results in his own career. Though this is not an example of sensecrafting per se—because it did not involve others—Carl demonstrated one of the building blocks of sensecrafting in that he was able to shift his own mental models.

Some of the participants could have derived value from embracing learning, including Marion who was struggling to get things accomplished in her new role and Michael who lamented not being able to have a role in trading within his own organization. A significant part of a learning intention that could have benefited each is having a willingness to be flexible with one's mental models. Marion was open to this idea, but during our time together she did not yet seem ready to take on the hard work of shifting mental models. Marion spoke of sharing her Left Hand Column with the colleague with whom she was struggling, but during our time together she did not follow

through on this. Likewise, Michael and I discussed sharing his concerns with his partner, but this was something Michael was unwilling to do. Marion and Michael made good starts in challenging their own mental models, but to be sensecrafting leaders, they need to influence others as well.

Carl's learning intention was tied to type of learning that I am concerned with here, one where individuals put their mental models at play and become willing to see them and willing to change them. Ruth and Josie also experienced shifts in the process that suggested they had experienced learning. For Ruth it was both broadening her scope and including different sorts of opportunities in her job search. For Josie, it was undergoing a transformation regarding how she viewed the changes at work and her place in them. Ian's process also appeared geared toward shifting mental models, but it was the mental models of his team. I did not see evidence of Ian shifting his own models and thereby experiencing transformative learning. In conclusion, while Ian is clearly building a learning organization, he does not appear to have a learning intention in the sense intended for this study.

Tolerating ambiguity. Tolerating ambiguity refers to withstanding conditions of ambiguity and looking for opportunities to transcend and include the ambiguous. Each of the participants expressed having to face ambiguity in their work (see Figure 4). Circumstances ranged from having to terminate employees while simultaneously building an open communication culture (Ian) to role dissatisfaction despite being a company founder (Michael) to the tension between the healer and judge archetypes in County Mental Health (Josie). Marion raised the topic of ambiguity most often. For Marion, ambiguity was a major function of her new role. Recall that Marion was the leader who had recently transferred from a field position to a headquarters role.

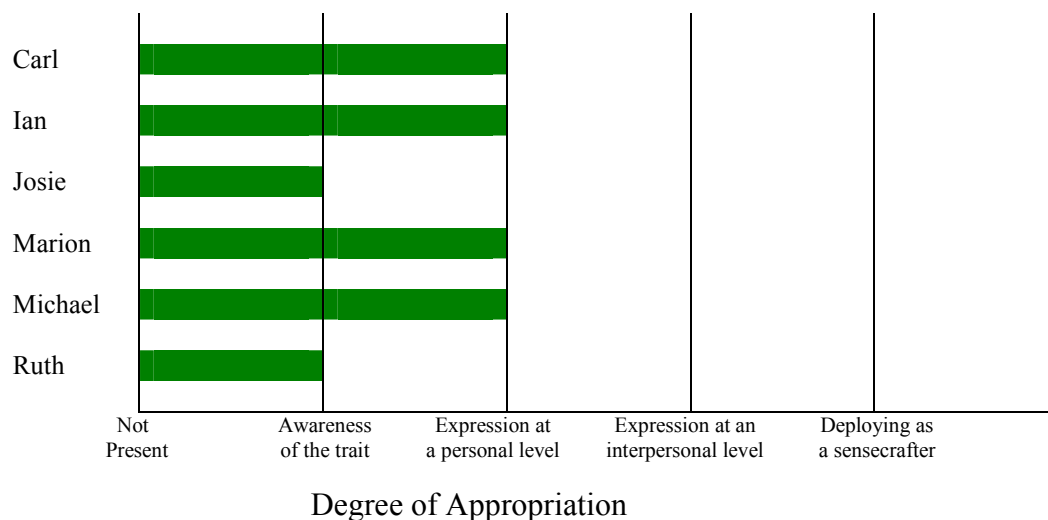


Figure 4. Tolerating ambiguity characteristics demonstrated by participants.

Marion struggled with the different protocols extant in the two organizations. In her old group, the motto was ‘done is better than perfect.’ Several months into her new role, Marion was still unclear how to precisely characterize the protocols of her new organization. She found that, in contrast to her old organization, things moved very slowly and she was unsure how accomplishments were defined or assessed. “Some of my greatest frustrations in the job is that specific protocols are supposed to be followed that in my assessment aren’t adding any value to the process,” Marion explained.

Another area in which Marion experienced ambiguity concerned her role. Despite her new role in headquarters, she still felt very connected with her previous role in the field. Marion wanted to leverage her new role to bring about change in the field that had frustrated her and her field peers. Marion reflected that in some sense, she was now a part of both groups; for Marion, this raised concerns about succeeding for both groups:

Because I’m, in theory, on both teams and if I don’t manage it right, I’m really on neither team. That’s the other in this no-man’s land: if I figure out how to stay connected while building connections, me and everyone benefits from that, but if I can’t, then I’ll end up being on nobody’s team. That isn’t great either.

Marion seems to be experiencing the tension between being a part of something while simultaneously desiring to stand apart from it. Kegan (1982) claimed that the pull between being a part of something and to be apart are two great human yearnings. Marion wants to stand apart from her new role in the sense that she cannot relate to how things are done. She still seems to be a part of her previous group, but wants to move more fully into her new role. At the same time, she will not drop her allegiance to removing obstacles for field employees—and this is apt as Marion’s role should be to advocate for the field in her new role. If Marion could have pulled off what she was striving for (“to stay connected while building connections”), I think she would have achieved the sensecrafting skill of tolerating ambiguity. In Marion’s case, finding a way to navigate the two sets of departmental protocols would have been critical to leading others in collective, deliberate meaning making.

The skill that I am interested in exploring for sensecrafting is tolerating ambiguity, not merely experiencing ambiguity. A leader who can tolerate ambiguity either has the wherewithal to live within paradox or the vision to be able to transcend apparent opposites. Most of the participants I spoke to were attempting to *deal* with ambiguity and could not be characterized as *tolerating* it.

Ian may have been one of the more successful at tolerating ambiguity. When he described the ambiguity that he was confronting, he often did so along with a comment about how he would need to overcome the situation—this revealed an underlying confidence. For example, in describing issues of culture fit, Ian explained:

One of my fears is that it’s difficult to exit a team supervisor if it’s for culture reasons or fit reasons. One team supervisor can break a lot of work for me. I got to get the courage up to figure out how to address that one.

In my earlier discussion of tolerating ambiguity (see chapter 2), I argued that the sensecrafting leader copes with ambiguity by either integrating or transcending. In both cases, patience is required. Michael, for example, was disturbed by the role he found himself in within an organization that he helped to start. Despite Michael's seemingly powerful role as the chief operating officer, he did not feel he had the ability to re-negotiate roles with his partner, and thus found himself cut out of trading—his true passion. Michael was not tolerating the ambiguity well. In fact he said that this unresolved issue was causing him to gain weight. In contrast to Ian's language, Michael sounds resigned:

It's ambiguous to me because it's a great company, and yet the role I have in it isn't the best role. I have to really push myself into this role [of chief operating officer]. It's a funny thing because I funded this thing. I kept this whole thing going. Here I am, not the happiest guy.

Like Michael, Josie does not seem to see herself as being in a position to resolve some of the ambiguities that she is confronting at the county. A key ambiguity that her department faces is that it is well funded; yet those funds tend to get re-distributed to other parts of the system.

Because we have been better funded than a lot of other services at our county [they] tend to take our moneys They've siphoned off a lot of our savings from personnel costs and keep charging us for things in our department. So Mental Health would say that we're probably the stepchild of the County, sort of like the one golden goose in some ways, that they keep stealing the eggs. So the perception is that the other departments depend on us for funding and keep making inferences that we are not competent at what we do where, in fact, we're supporting a lot of other programs.

Carl, on the other hand, defined issues of ambiguity that were more within his control. So naturally, he was in a better position to transcend or integrate the ambiguity. Carl brought up ambiguity in the context of how one goes about telling oneself more generative stories. "You have to really trust yourself," explained Carl.

Telling yourself different stories about the way things could be requires a bit of vulnerability, because it's different. People aren't real comfortable with that change and the not knowing. Even though, if you ask me the not knowing is so awesome, it's like ridiculous. There's no vulnerability at all, once you get past it. Once you see the benefits of doing what you are talking about, sensecrafting, telling a different story. There's only the upside.

For Carl, the ambiguity felt is a temporary state. It would appear that he's experienced the state of uncertainty, and benefited from it, enough times that he not only tolerates uncertainty, he welcomes it. This is a powerful state to be in from a creative standpoint.

Carl's willingness to embrace ambiguity helped to usher in a sea change in his relationship with his boss, Al. In an imaginary conversation, Carl says to Al:

You are completely different from me. In my previous story, you annoyed the hell out of me, and now the story . . . everything you approach I might not agree with it, but there are things that I can take from it that I can apply that will make me more, not so much more successful, but more effective in what I do.

In chapter 2, I discussed how the real world cannot be understood without being filtered through our mental models. Since we cannot apprehend the world in a pure way, without mental models, we need the means to alter and expand our mental models. Once we do this, the ambiguity often falls away, revealing itself to be a product of our own thinking. Carl had this awareness and not only thrived in conditions of ambiguity, he excelled in them. Marion, on the other hand, was getting caught up in her own mental models, unable to escape. There was, however, a glimmer of hope for Marion. One of the cards poses a question from Byron Katie (2008) (whose work Marion is familiar with): Who would you be without your story? Marion's answer suggests that she has the ability to challenge her mental models and ultimately transcend them:

I think without that story, I would be free of these assumptions. I mean, that's the whole point. Without the story, none of these assumptions support the story that

I'm telling myself. Yeah, what would I be without my story? I probably would be someone who was still working collaboratively with this person on this proposal.

I believe this is hopeful because it expresses that Marion may have the capacity to do the difficult work of expanding her mental models to include her old and new paradigms. This would be a prerequisite to Marion taking a step as leader to craft a mutually acceptable solution that would satisfy both parties. This kind of collective meaning-making is the embodiment of sensecrafting.

Discernment. Discernment concerns drawing distinctions between this and that, differentiating figure from ground. Discernment is a critical skill for the sensecrafting leader: included within the scope of discernment is the ability to recognize “subtle cues that had gone unnoticed before. When these cues are noticed, routines that had been unfolding mindlessly are interrupted” (Weick & Putnam, 2006, p. 280).

This was a skill that was not prevalent in all participants, but appeared important to Josie, Ruth and Marion (see Figure 5). For Josie, discernment took the shape of questions of personal fit within County Mental Health and concerns about the way the county provides services. For Ruth, discernment was a more personal issue, showing up in the way she directed her energy. Marion was attempting to draw distinctions between her current and previous role and to determine what was in scope for her new position. While each of these individuals demonstrated discernment at an individual level, for the sensecrafting leader it is important to demonstrate such skills in the service of creating collective, deliberate sense. Therefore, I would characterize the skill demonstrated to be nascent—they can do it for themselves but did not provide examples of doing so for the benefit of others.

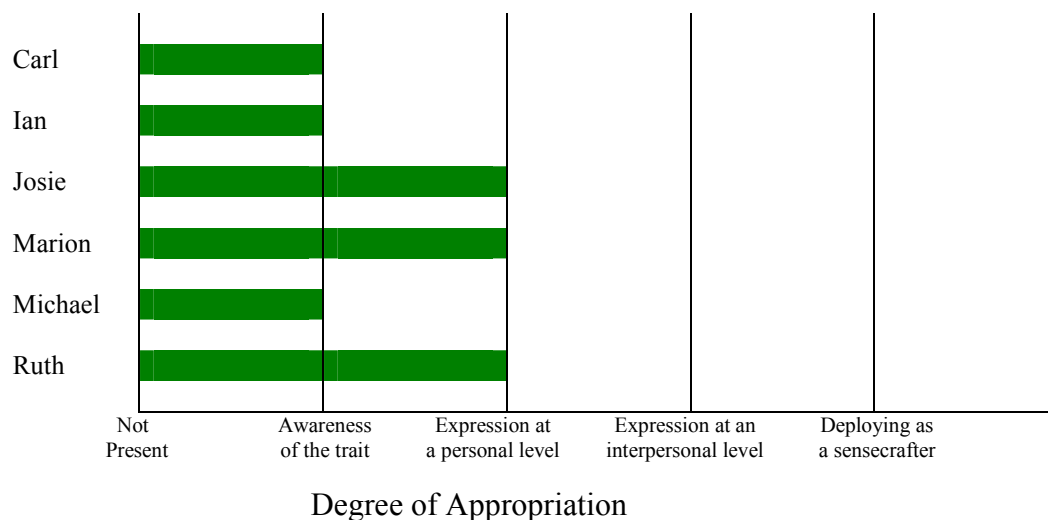


Figure 5. Discernment characteristics demonstrated by participants.

While Josie did not talk about trying to help others shift their meaning system, her scope of interest was rather broad, encompassing concerns beyond the personal, which suggests leadership. One of Josie’s key concerns about County Mental Health related to the services provided. She worried that people with mental illness were being stigmatized and criminalized. Furthermore, some of the County’s processes interfered with what should have been the primary mission: “My sense of what happens . . . is that sometimes you run up against ethical things that you get caught in the field of helping, for example, and you sometimes are doing things that aren’t actually helpful,” Josie reported.

Josie provided an example of a man whose surname was Ford. Ford was delusional and believed that he was heir to the Ford family fortune. For a time, he would get officials and attorneys to believe him and help him until they realized he was delusional. “So then he becomes a nuisance,” Josie explained. “Then they don’t help him with things that he really does need help with.” In this case, the County seemed to be having difficulty distinguishing between behavior driven by mental illness and criminal

or negligent behavior. “So there’s that balance between sort of punishing people and having them go back to jail,” Josie noted. The way Josie made sense of it was to consider the presence of two contradictory archetypes: the healer and the shadow of the healer, or the judge.

Another point on which Josie was trying to discern is whether or not there is a fit for her at the County. The main question that Josie was wrestling with is “Do I feel like I can be part of that team and is the voice that’s being spoken about how to organize the structure what I want?” Through our work together, Josie came to see a way to answer this question in the affirmative. She concluded, “there could be a niche for me in that process that would meet my needs, both personally and professionally and would still be consistent with the way that county’s going.”

Ruth was going through a similar discernment process with regard to her role as a people manager. When we spoke, Ruth was considering a career move, transitioning out of her manager role into a project management capacity. A lot of soul-searching brought Ruth to the conclusion that a project management role might be the way to meet her professional needs. “The other thing that I examined was my interests,” Ruth explained to me:

What story have I been telling myself about what interests me in terms of a career? I delved a little bit more into consulting, for that whole conversation you and I have had in the past where, knowing that one of my talents is thought and analysis . . .

Broadening her horizons with regard to the job search was enlightening for Ruth. Ruth further explained the shift in her interests, “I found what’s driving [the interest] is the consulting portion and the analysis. Seven out of ten of my strengths are Thinking. I am always in that analysis state,” Ruth explained, referring to StrengthFinders

(Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). During our time together, Ruth posted for two jobs—this represents an ideal opportunity for Ruth to translate her new conclusions about jobs for which she would be a fit to the hiring managers and interviewers. Applying and interviewing for a job is a good chance to put sensecrafting skills into play and to try to shape collective meaning making.

Another important way in which Ruth used discernment was in working with her personal energy. One of the issues that Ruth and I explored was her tendency toward perfectionism and overvaluing what other people think of her. Ruth explained her experience of this phenomenon and the transition she underwent:

It seems like it was, you want to be seen by this person. You're placing value in their perception over your own. As soon as I realized that, I put it back on me, my perceptions, what's most valuable [to me] at this moment.

Being able to discern between her own perceptions and others was valuable for Ruth not only personally but also in her role as a manager. Ruth had employees with similar issues of perfectionism and an over-reliance on what other people believed about them. She would find that the performance of these employees would falter when they felt that they were not earning approval (generally either the customer's or Ruth's). Having identified and overcome this issue for herself, Ruth was well positioned to help employees to realize they were giving away their own power for self-approval and how they could overcome this.

A final area where discernment became a useful concept for Ruth is with regard to picking up other people's energy. Ruth describes herself as an empathic type and says that this means:

I'm a magnet for other people's feelings and stuff . . . Really being able to have a barrier of what's mine and what's yours is very hard for me. I know a lot of the

different activities and practices and things to do. They work to a certain degree. I think it's just my need to do them more.

As part of our work together, Ruth agreed to identify and use an affirmation to help her stay grounded and to be able to discern her energy from others. Our hope is that the affirmation will promote a mindfulness that will allow Ruth to draw critical distinctions between her own energy and that of others. Maturana describes why this is important:

You cannot see the place on which you stand; it is too close, too connected to you. Once you see it, you realize you have moved, and your field is enlarged. For this reason, seeing out limits clearly--perhaps for the first time--is actually evidence of progress, not falling back, though the experience can at first be depressing or disturbing. There is a part of us that is able to discern these things, even as there is also a part that blindly accepts our perceptions or habits of thought (as cited in Isaacs, 1999, p. 340).

Openness. Openness is a broad term, so it will be helpful as we begin our discussion to revisit some of the meanings of openness that I wish to employ in this discussion. I am speaking of openness as receptivity, of reconnaissance, and of recognizing that multiple perspectives can exist simultaneously. For my participants, openness seemed to be the most relevant to Carl, Marion and Josie, though examples came up for each participant (see Figure 6).

Ian, for example, was struggling with a lack of openness in the organizational culture; he was trying to break down these barriers in order to encourage a more free-flowing stream of conversation and to get people to talk about their struggles and mistakes so that the group can work toward improvement. With Ian's openness, I believe that he is trying to demonstrate and model that honest communication is more important than appearing to be right or perfect. He wants to hear about mistakes and problems so that they can be addressed. His desire to hear about what has gone wrong is so strong that

he deliberately praises this behavior. It reminds me of a story about how TQM is manifest at Toyota: an American manager was working on the assembly line in order to learn the business. The manager left a part out of place on one of his assemblies. He hesitated to push the stop bottom of the line; his instinct was to appear to be flawless and admitting his mistake defied his instinct. He pushed the bottom nonetheless and received resounding encouragement for having acknowledging his error. This is the type of communication that Ian was trying to promote in his organization. Because his efforts to try to shape the meaning making system were collective and deliberate, this represents an example of sensecrafting

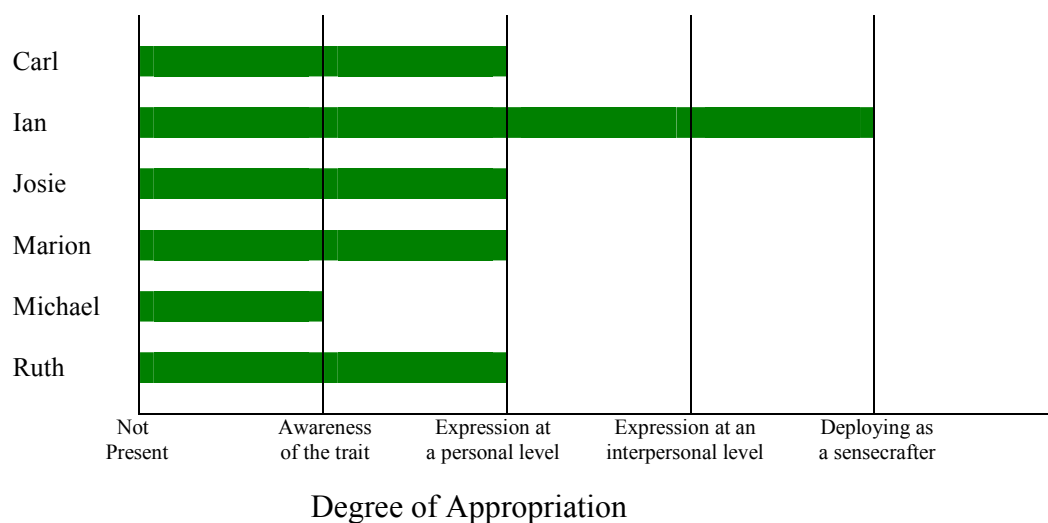


Figure 6. Openness characteristics demonstrated by participants.

In the case of Michael, at first he displayed a lack of openness when it came to addressing his role within the company he helped to found. Recall that while Michael was chief operating officer, he longed to be more involved in trading. Initially when I asked Michael whether he could renegotiate his role with his partner, Michael responded, “It’s a little late to talk about what we’re doing. It is something I can talk to him about,

but I don't know what solution we could possibly come up with, really." Michael seemed not only closed to the idea of having the conversation, but also to the hope that something positive might come out of it. Later in our conversations, something had shifted for Michael, and he became more open to the idea, stating, "At some point, I got to make sure it's working for me. I don't know when the right time to broach that is, but I'm standing by." This was an important shift for Michael, representing the possibility that he might raise the subject. Bringing issues out into the open is a critical prerequisite to being a sensecrafting leader.

Many of the participants exhibited openness in their willingness to share very personal concerns in the research process. This was true for everyone, but especially so for Ruth, Josie and Marion. Both Josie and Ruth commented about a conflicting emotion that almost caused them to shut down during the research process. For Josie this manifested as wanting to delay one of our dialogues because issues were not as resolved as she would like them to be. She initially told herself, "I'm not at a place where I really want to talk to Kira about this because I'm not as resolved or at the point where I thought I should be . . . around the process." However, Josie did not stick with that thought and concluded: "No, the whole idea of the process is that you don't have the answers. The whole idea is that you're processing things." Josie kept our appointment and we had a very productive conversation about the processing work that Josie had been doing. Similarly, Ruth had some anxiety about the process, and self-judgments about where she should be with the work. In a moment of reflection, Ruth explained, "I sound only partially excited maybe, because the other part wants to run and hide from it. . ."

Marion shared with me at a deeply personal level during our conversations. "I really thought that I had gotten better operating at a higher consciousness level," she

reported. “It’s not just assumptions that are neutral. They are more on the negative side of assumptions which is like I said, that’s the humbling part. I really thought I was doing better at that level of thinking.” Each of these ladies demonstrated a willingness to be personal and open with me. This shows they have the capacity to be open with others. In order to demonstrate the kind of openness required in sensecrafting, they would have to exhibit openness with those with whom they are trying to create collective meaning.

In addition to Josie being open to her own vulnerability, she spoke about issues of openness in County Mental Health. Like Ian, she was confronting an environment that was somewhat closed in nature. For example, regarding the integration, Josie stated, “It’s not really pulling people into the level that I was really hoping it would.” Yet, Josie remained open to the process the County is going through: “The leadership is going in a direction that I’m supportive of and that I can be on board with.” Josie’s openness led to a surprising conclusion. After she shared many concerns and misgivings about management, she declared, “I came to the conclusion after I was able to get some distance that I am more of a fit still than I thought I was.” For Josie, a possibility of being a sensecrafting leader opens up here if she follows through and becomes an active participant in shaping the direction of the county; however, it is not clear that playing such a role would be appropriate given Josie’s position within the county.

Carl demonstrated the openness to change his assumptions and mental models, leading to powerful results. Carl had been making plans to leave his job because of his difficulties working with his boss, Al. By the end of research work, Carl had experienced a sea change, not only reversing his position, but also coming to a place where he actually experienced Al differently.

AI is very data driven, and if it's not tangible he has tough time grasping the value of something. I put judgment on that prior, and by re-framing my thought process and my approach, I think he is hearing what I have to say in a completely different way and starting to see value.

Carl took the shift in his mental models further, embracing data and analysis. Carl reported:

Data, while it's beneficial, to me it's inherently flawed, so it never tells the full story. But now I see how putting some structure around how what I bring to the table can benefit, not just me, but the organization. It sounds crazy, but for now I'm immersing myself in learning how to use Excel to benefit what I do naturally.

This represents quite a leap for Carl who spoke disparagingly about AI's reliance on data at our first session.

Like Ruth, Carl used grounding techniques. In this way, he demonstrates openness to what in the West, are considered non-traditional techniques. For example, in composing an email for AI, Carl attended to his own emotions and energy before writing the email:

[I] clear[ed] my mind because I sens[ed] that I had this negative train of thought about it and how he would receive it and I realize[d], "Okay, I got to clear my mind of that. I got to get rid of that and I got to get to a neutral or, better yet, positive . . ." which allowed me to be much more creative in crafting [the email] and anticipating what he would want so that it would satisfy what he was looking for and he could make the decision.

Like Marion, Ruth, and Josie, Carl's openness was on a fairly personal level, but unlike the ladies, it did have an obvious impact on another person (AI). So with Carl's openness to change, we see him take a step closer to embracing the skills of a sensecrafter.

Framing. Each of the participants made extensive use of framing. Of the nine properties of the sensecrafting leader, framing is perhaps the one most directly concerning with meaning making. A helpful way to understand framing is to recall the

quote from Chia (2000): “. . . we start with ‘an undifferentiated flux of fleeting sense-impressions and it is out of this brute aboriginal flux of lived experience that attention carves out and conception names’” (p. 3). Framing here constitutes the outlines of what has been cut out. Framing is similar to discernment, but not to be confused with it. Framing defines the boundaries of our playing field. Discernment differentiates the objects that populate it.

Ian used framing to define for his team what is most important (see Figure 7). He attempted to drive collective meaning of what he means by providing customer service. For example, when speaking of customer service, he said, “We’re not doing it for customer satisfaction scores, we’re doing it for customers that need us.” By this, he meant that the most important thing happening on the call was the customer’s need and the representative’s efforts to meet that need. Ian was using the frame of the phone call to delineate what is important and within that he defined the way in which the call should be seen, by both the representative and the leaders who might assess it.

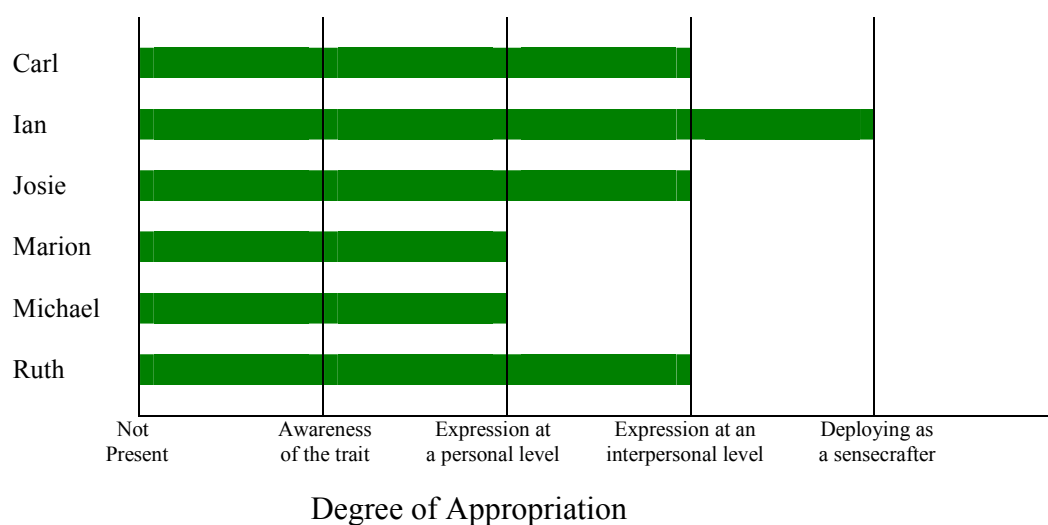


Figure 7. Framing characteristics demonstrated by participants.

Ian was sensitive to the need to succinctly capture what is most important to him and to consistently communicate that to his organization. He explained:

That's why I went back to this vision statement. . . . It's just to get down to three things that I'm always talking about. Maybe I'm confusing people because I am all over the map or something. I'm talking about too many priorities. They're not hearing from me consistently and believing "He's serious about this."

Ian's comments belied the struggle he feels in getting people to embrace what's important to him. Before he was promoted, Ian was well known for being an inspired and innovative manager. I believe that it was those traits, along with strengths as a storyteller that helped him to secure his promotion. Ian seems to exemplify what Smircich and Morgan (1982) described:

[Certain individuals] emerge as leaders because of their role in framing experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action, e.g., by mobilizing meaning, articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidating, confronting, or changing prevailing. (p. 258)

For Michael, success itself is a function of framing:

There's no, to me, real success. It's just created. The guy that finished 10th in a marathon when they were projected to finish 1000th is a huge success. That was invented. The guy that finished 1st is a success [to the public] but to [the first place finisher, maybe] they're a failure because they didn't beat the world record and they know they could have, but they didn't do it. It's all a made-up construct.

Michael pointed out the difference between individual goals and the more obvious public goals. In his example, each runner had their own goals that differed from the mainstream goals. The individual's goals served as a frame, giving different meaning to each athlete.

This is similar to Ruth's job postings. While the standard criterion of success in pursuing a new job is to secure the new position, Ruth saw the value in simply going through the process.

Here's where I haven't made getting the job so much important to me as the process of how I look at this and what drives me inside to do it . . . I don't have to be perfect. Even in my interview, what I really want to get across is who I am and how I do things.

This is a helpful stance for Ruth to take as she attempts to educate others about how she sees herself going in a new career direction. It is the province of the sensecrafter to create collective meaning in situations such as job interviews, particularly where the individual is pursuing a new career path.

Ruth applied this perspective to other aspects of her life and work:

If I was to describe how I feel, I feel more at peace and more aligned. Which helps me, I believe in making decisions every day. I am doing my best not to measure it to a win because I really want it to be about the value of my life experience more than anything else. That's really how I am outside of work.

Ruth took re-framing a step further, applying it to one of her employees, a customer service representative who was struggling with customer interactions. Ruth helped the employee to change the way she thinks about providing customer service and by eliminating sources of interference such as the representative's personal judgment and judgment of the customer. "We have moved her through being a low performer to a very high performer just simply by shifting the way she thinks about what she does," Ruth reported. Ruth further counseled the representative:

Your best will be changing and will continue to change and so how do you talk yourself into recognizing what your best is and that it's going to vary and how to show up at the highest level that you can for the day to do what you do without being punishing [to yourself].

By coaching her employee on framing, Ruth moved a step close toward sensecrafting by moving past the personal.

Like Ruth, Josie applied deliberate framing to her career prospects within County Mental Health. She used the Ladder of Inference to explore her framing and mental models. Josie's output shows how she moved up the ladder:

I selected data from clinic services and did not move to ensure that I received accurate and timely data from [the Mental Health] Director. I added meaning that he was closing program entirely and was discriminating against me because of my age and health condition. I assumed that I had little power in where I went or what assertive action I should take—did not get network going around options. I adopted belief that I could not get needs met at county and [should] take action to recommit to private practice and nonprofit set-up.

Josie's subsequent conclusions, that there was a way for her to have a voice and a meaningful role at the county, demonstrated a shift in her thinking that suggested a reframing of the situation.

Josie was also struggling with the way that others were framing. For example, in the county, she found that a law and order frame was sometimes circumventing the mental health mandate of her department. This showed up as “. . . maintaining the status quo, punishing the criminals. In some sense it's criminalizing behaviors from mentally ill clients.” Josie characterized this behavior as ‘the shadow of the healer.’

Another strong framing that manifested itself at the county was a fragmented organization, which Josie termed ‘operating in silos.’ When an organization is ‘silo-ed’ there is strong vertical alignment but a lack of communication and cooperation flowing horizontally amongst the various departments, hence the silo imagery. Josie saw this as potentially jeopardizing the county's integration: “People are really like in that silo mode and it's hard for them to reach across, and so they're not necessarily seeing a collaborative element there,” she explained. The county tending to be hierarchical further exacerbated this.

The integration that Josie describes is likely made more difficult by the different departments using different frames, as described by Choo (2006):

They [different organizations] arrive at different interpretations because they bracket and highlight different features of the environment; they use different labels and language to describe and discuss what they are noticing; they construct meaning by relying on their beliefs and their past actions. The way organizations make sense of events and trends thus depends on their beliefs and the history of actions they have taken. (p. 7)

Josie demonstrated a keen awareness for organizational dynamics. Given an appropriate voice within the organization, she may have been able to act as a sensecrafting leader by parlaying her insights into tangible change ideas.

Like Josie, Carl was questioning his fit in his organization. Both he and Josie seemed to experience a career renaissance, or at least an opening to new possibilities. When Carl and I first began working together he was concerned about his relationship with his boss Al. The situation was serious enough for Carl that he was making plans to leave the organization. He could not believe that the organization would promote someone of Al's "ilk." Carl's concerns lay in part with Al's over-reliance on data and under-valuing of human elements. After Carl was exposed to sensecrafting, it was as if something woke up inside of him. He readily gravitated to thinking differently and questioning his mental models and assumptions.

Carl described the shift in his relationship with Al:

Al is very data driven, and if it's not tangible he has tough time grasping the value of something. I put judgment on that prior, and by re-framing my thought process and my approach, I think he is hearing what I have to say in a completely different way and starting to see value.

What is particularly profound about the changes that Carl experienced is that the changes were not isolated to his own behavior. From Carl's perspective, Al actually changed as a

result of the way Carl was thinking. Carl explained this transformation after Al surprised him by taking Carl's side in a meeting:

I just looked at him and I smiled because my initial reaction is like, "Who are you?" Just that quickly I realized [that] how I interacted with him very much determines how he receives my meaning and information I provide him or communicate to him, and how he processes it that.

Carl was enthused about his discovery that his thought process affected so much.

He discussed how he was applying the skill to more parts of his life:

One of the things that I've been really focusing on was, if something is not working, then how can I change my thinking about that. . . . Once I had started reframing this story, and it's all about, "I have to change," so I catch myself when I have the tendency to jump back into the negative thoughts and change them.

Again, during our research together, Carl's influence was limited to his relationship with Al. By broadening that influence to more people, Carl would demonstrate true sensecrafting skills from a framing perspective.

For Marion, the issue of framing was more related to how she was attempting to understand the actions and statements of others. Recall that Marion was experiencing frustration in her new headquarters role because it felt to her like things were not moving as quickly as they should. She had brought with her from the field the heuristic: "Done is better than perfect." This meant that it was better to implement something sooner rather than later and not worry if the project was 100% effective. A project too quickly executed was acceptable—much like the philosophy of some software releases: the bugs could be worked out later. Contrary to her old paradigm, in her new organization, Marion was told: "You're not realistic in your timelines and what you want to accomplish in your goals." In turning to a peer for advice, she was told:

I have just learned to plan that it's going to be three times longer and three times more difficult than it should be and so I build that into my model of where I'm going to deliver something because you don't want to over promise and under

deliver and that's the real risk of moving at a pace that you think you should be moving.

Marion was not able to accept this framing. She believed that the timelines were unnecessarily long and that the opportunity cost of not moving fast enough was too great. Marion is trying to adapt to her new environment, but she does not yet understand the value proposition. Marion sketched out a tentative framing that might apply to her new organization:

It's the deliverable versus actually getting anything done—sounds bad because the cycle time of delivery is so different [in headquarters] than in the field that you don't get the reward of a deliverable very often so like human nature is, I think you find a different way to be seen as valuable and connected and working on something that's bigger than yourself, all the things that we need to feel enriched. I haven't quite figured out what those are yet.

Marion's inability to understand the nature of expected deliverables in her new organization was extremely frustrating for her. Furthermore, she had not found a way to re-frame the situation to something more palatable.

The situation is further exacerbated by assumptions that Marion brought to her new role from her field position. Here, Marion was characteristically self-revealing: "In terms of the work that I can do to reframe me, I am really facing some prejudice or preconceived ideas I have about my headquarters partners and various shared services." One of the big dilemmas for Marion is that she is actually finding these preconceived notions and assumptions being validated by the behavior of her new peers. This is making it difficult for Marion to reframe the situation.

Marion was encountering a very different set of frames in her new organization compared to her previous one. This is similar to Snowden's (2001) description that "There will often be an existing group of myths in place at an organisational (and frequently sub-organisational level) that are powerfully entrenched and therefore provide

the interpretive framework through which any new messages will be perceived” (p. 7). Marion had a good command of the frames extant in the field and put a lot of effort into understanding the frames in headquarters. In order to be an effective sensecrafter, Marion would have needed to reconcile the two sets of frames or craft a new set that worked for both organizations. This would be a tall order, but it is necessary to promote action that benefited both organizations.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is a term that requires definition. In chapter 2, I discussed Eastern and Western takes on mindfulness and concluded that my use of the term is a hybrid of both perspectives. To be mindful in the sense that I am using it means to be in a state that transcends our mental models—a state more akin to pure consciousness. Unlike the other sensecrafting traits, mindfulness exists purely at a personal level. It is a state of mind that a sensecrafting leader must possess; but, it is not a trait that we can see at a collective level. Josie, Carl and Ruth most often exhibited mindfulness in this study (see Figure 8).

Josie’s mindfulness showed up as awareness. For example, Josie is circumspect about her anxiety. “There is a lot of anxiety in this situation for me, period. I’ve got to recognize that,” Josie told me, demonstrating awareness for how her feelings are triggered:

I know that stuff is going on and I’m processing it. In the past [when having anxiety], I have attempted to just go on and not attend to things and do business as usual and it doesn’t work for me if I do that.

Josie exhibits an awareness of how her anxiety affects her and what she must do to cope with it effectively.

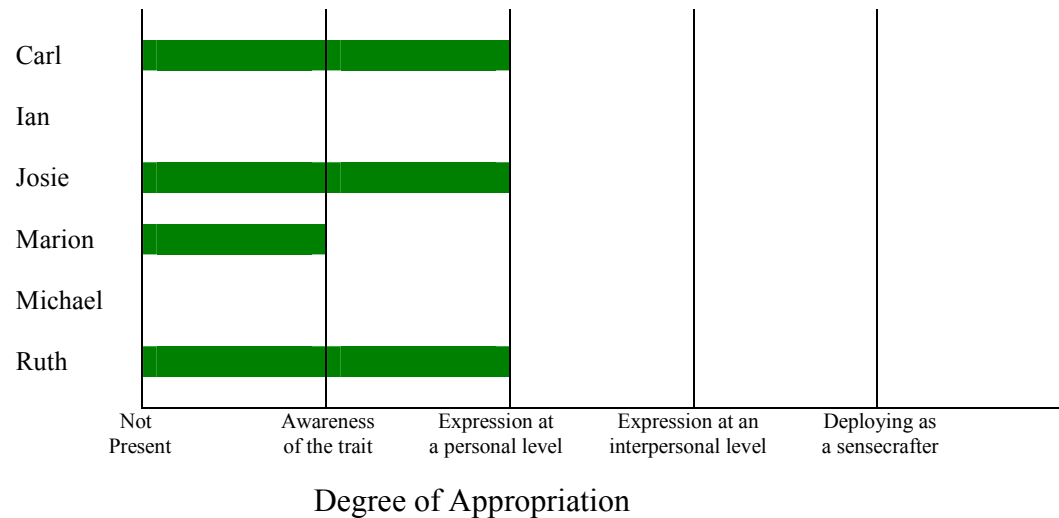


Figure 8. Mindfulness characteristics demonstrated by participants.

Being on leave and participating in the sensecrafting study gave Josie a chance to step back and process what she was encountering at work.

I thought that I was drawing conclusions . . . and more personalizing, what is really an institutional process. And there are ways to deal with it, that I was taking it too personally and that it was due to my own anxiety. I was making assumptions . . . and I had faulty reasoning. I came to the conclusion that . . . there wasn't as much a disconnect The thing is am I a fit and am I not a fit with the values of the county.

Continuing through the process together, Josie eventually concluded that there was in fact a way that she could fit into County Mental Health.

Mindfulness is a practice that came naturally to Carl. He is already an experienced meditator. Carl is very familiar with different states of mind and controlling these in himself. He described what mindfulness is to him: “you put yourself in a state where you are receptive to, or you are in a state of allowing, where those ideas, concepts, wisdom, creativity, wherever it is, that can come to the surface.”

Being able to place himself in a state of receptivity was instrumental to Carl's ability to monitor his own thoughts and catch himself making assumptions. For example, this skill was vital in transforming Carl's relationship with his boss, Al. "I catch myself when [Al] makes decisions, you know, jumping to a conclusion that I'm right in my assumption, in that story that I'm telling myself," Carl explained.

Carl came to an important realization through our work together, a realization that he found empowering. When Carl and I first started working together, he was making plans to leave the company. His philosophy was, "I've never looked to my bosses for engagement, for them to actively engage me 'cause I feel like I'm pretty engaged and I love what I do, but don't disengage me." It had gotten to the point where Carl felt Al's behavior was disengaging. Through the process of our research together, and through Carl's expanding mindfulness, he took control of the narrative. As Carl explained, "I look at that as almost kind of a victim story where he can't disengage me unless I allow him to. He can't disengage me, my thoughts about him are what disengages me." This awareness saved Carl's job.

Once having made the realization about the power of his thinking, Carl became almost playful about it. "It's kind of like the Company is . . . my creative workshop. I want to see what can come from this. It's almost like a case study." He had come to a similar experimental attitude about his relationship with Al. "I keep telling myself, 'This [interacting with Al] is almost the ultimate opportunity for me to manage my perceptions and thoughts around the situation because it's such a challenge.'"

Like Carl, Ruth is an experienced meditator and is comfortable in Eastern modalities. Ruth wrote an affirmation to help in keeping herself grounded. Recall this is an issue for Ruth, who characterizes herself as empathic. Ruth was having a difficult time

discerning energy between herself and others. Her affirmation was intended to increase her energetic boundaries and enable her to be receptive in a healthy way. “My affirmation is The point of power is at the present moment. The truth is I am powerful in this moment and every moment and I demonstrate this now.”

Ruth also displayed mindfulness in the form of thought watching. The idea here is to be aware of one’s thinking and the consequences of one’s thoughts so that one can more consciously choose thoughts that are generative. Ruth explained that she was “really more conscious of what is going on in my mind at different times, especially with the perfect[ionism] and trying to be perfect about things.”

Marion also exhibited the skill of mindfulness, in this case using it as an awareness of her mental models. “When I used some of these [sensecrafting] tools about mindfulness or being open, I’m really coming with 80% of it already framed out.” For Marion, this meant that despite her desires, Marion was not being open to authentically experiencing her new peers as they were. Rather, her own mental models were dominating, and she was apprehending mostly what she already believed about her peers, not seeing who they truly were.

Envisioning. When I introduced my conceptualization of Envisioning in chapter 2, I emphasized journey rather than destination itself. I felt that this was important distinction for three reasons: (a) the need for the vision to be adaptive, (b) the power of participation in the vision’s creation, and (c) the leader’s imperfect ability to predict the future.

Ian exemplified the participative process of sensecrafter envisioning that I imagined (see Figure 9). Here he describes the process he is using in vision creation:

I'm trying to get [leaders] to align towards the . . . vision of what do they want to be known for and move that forward. To feel organic . . . I'm trying to craft it behind the scenes for sure. I want people to feel like they've had a lot of influence in it.

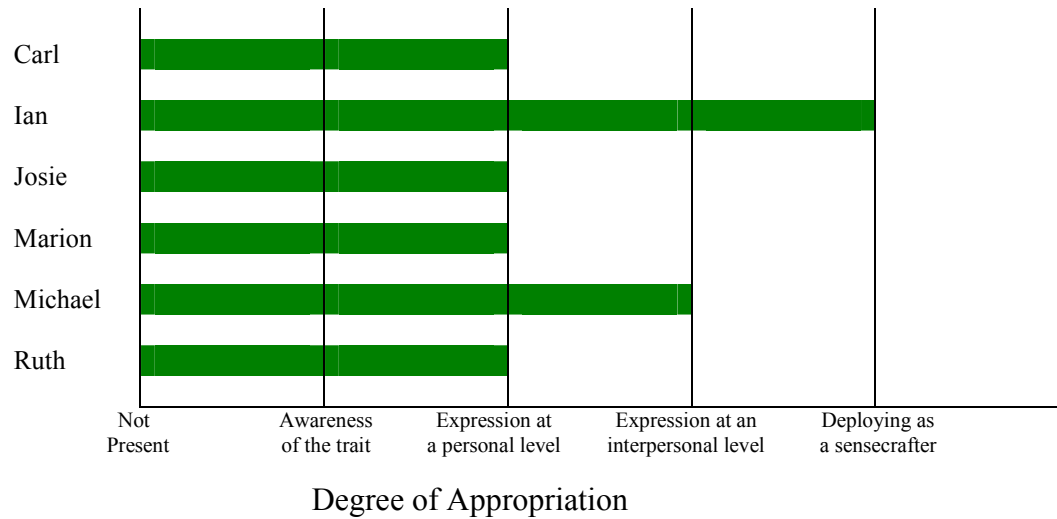


Figure 9. Envisioning characteristics demonstrated by participants.

Part of Ian's process is to leave documents lying around with questions like "What do we want to be known for?" and "What do we want to be the best at?" Ian hopes that people will respond to these questions and bring their answers to a brainstorming session where the group will collectively define the vision.

Once the vision is in place, Ian hopes it will define what is most important to his organization.

[Employees will think] these are the things he's serious about and he doesn't stop talking to me about them.' That's where I'm headed in this idea of getting to people to believe. These are the things that I really care about and I want you to care about them too.

For Michael, envisioning is a personal process that he relies on to define his future. Michael utilizes a process, described in Chapter Four, of creating his company,

co-workers and who he will be in that organization. Michael describes himself as a creative artist. He describes his envisioning process as follows:

Before I join any organization, what I do is I write down all the stories I have about it before I go into it and then I write on a piece of paper, I read it over and then I rip it up and then I write down how I say it's going to go. Then every day I read how I say it's going to go. I create who I'm working with, each person who I'm working with, I create what we're up to, I create who I am.

Michael attributes the great success of his companies to this visioning process:

I did that two companies ago and that company grew by like 500% in 3 years. I did it with the last company that I started and that company grew big enough so that I could sell it. I'm doing it again with this company. Before I joined I went through that whole process again.

Michael's vision is interpersonal in the sense that he seeks to enroll others in his vision, but it is personal in the sense that he created the vision alone.

Despite Michael's strong envisioning process, he does not have the same confidence in applying the approach to one of his biggest struggles: the fact that his role does not include trading. "I have this fantasy that I'll make so much money with those other trading ideas that I can then just go into trading," Michael explained, then adds, "That's not going to happen either, though, but that's the fantasy I create now to deal with it."

Like Michael, Josie's envisioning was a bit more personal in nature. However, Josie's position was at a very different level in the organization. During our work together, I had the sense that Josie was trying to find her voice by determining just how much she could influence. Josie certainly had ideas for how things could be better. In working internationally, she had seen how programs like the Affordable Care Act could function. She also felt that "the system could be more humanizing."

As we explored who in the organization has the privilege to author stories, we discussed a quote from Simmons (2007): “If you control the feelings and filters of enough people you can alter their conclusions about reality” (Chapter 1, para. 10). Josie had some difficulty with the word *control*. As an alternative, she suggested: “I wouldn’t put it quite as control as much as if you resonate with the zeitgeist, the sense of the organization . . . Then I think the movement can happen, and that’s sort of what I’m trying to do right now.” Through “resonating with the zeitgeist,” Josie was trying to find an influential voice to advocate for her vision of a “county based clinic that is consumer focused and aligned with [the] Affordable Care Act. I am concerned about quality and quantity of care.”

Marion scarcely used envisioning and when she did it took the shape of wondering why things could not be better. The following quote illustrates Marion’s typical approach toward envisioning: “I find it frustrating that [the necessity for slow, deliberate action in headquarters] could be the reality, [but] I’m talking to people that have enough power and influence that we could create a different reality if anyone wanted to.” Another lament again emphasizes Marion frustration with the people whom she assumes are powerful enough to change the situation: “so it frustrates me because what I want to hear them say is, ‘Wow, we don’t normally deliver at this pace, what can we do to figure out how to balance those two demands to get something different?’”

Action. Ian, Ruth and Josie made the most consistent use of action, with Ian particularly excelling at it (see Figure 10).

Ian made persistent use of action and his actions were always deliberately aligned to his vision. For example, Ian set an action-oriented tone at his weekly leadership meetings. He consistently asked questions or made statements along the lines of: “Let’s

talk about what we can do to help.” Demonstrating the importance of creating such a dialogue and modeling the desired behavior, Ian added,

I thought that was a key moment for people to see. I’m hoping I will have queued up a few more of those moments for people to see that that’s the way I’m going to treat everyone, we’re not going to call out.

With action that is tightly aligned to vision and collective in nature, on this trait, Ian excels as a sensecrafting leader.

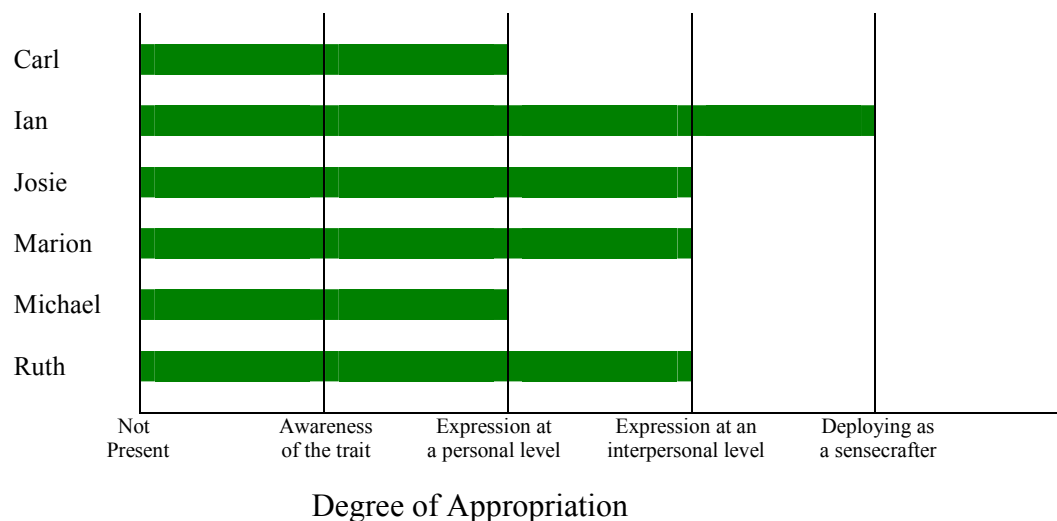


Figure 10. Action characteristics demonstrated by participants.

Ian understands the importance of aligning rhetoric with action:

I’m going to have to exhibit choices so that people know it’s real. If you start saying we’re going to strive for excellence and not tolerate poor [customer service] performance or mistreatment of a customer then I have to be able to execute against that.

Ian proved to me that these are not empty words through countless stories about actions that he took to make process improvements based on employees’ input.

Ian has taken very tangible actions to create a better working environment for employees. When he learned that they were gaping salary inequities amongst his team

supervisors, Ian took immediate action and was able to secure salary increases for those who were underpaid. He also fixed a call routing issue that was a distraction for a team supervisor. As Ian described the situation: “I had it solved within 2 hours and taken care [of] and so the next meeting I had [the supervisor] tell that story about these are the kind of things that I can help with.” As is typical for Ian, he not only took the action but had it queued up as a story, ready to be shared as an example of the good things that will happen when people share their struggles.

Josie found that taking action was critical too, and she did so despite the fact that she was on leave at the time of our interviews. While Josie was weighing her options and trying to determine whether she could be a fit at County Mental Health, she decided to make a phone call to connect back at work.

Like this morning actually, . . . I called work because . . . I’m only talking to people periodically about what’s going on with my health and I have been missing the folks at work. So I called to work and said, “I’ve been missing you guys and . . . I’ve been missing the job and I’m wondering how people are.” In the past, I wouldn’t have done that. In the past, that was too personal and I wouldn’t have done that.

This phone call proved to be pivotal. Josie describes the benefit of having made the phone call:

I did it because . . . there’s an authoring process that’s going on and in a period of change, I wanted to be part of that authoring process. I saw the call differently [than I would have before our work together] and I constructed the conversation on the phone differently. And then I gleaned some information about what’s happening in the county that supports the fact that I could move into a role and make some suggestions about what a role could be for myself.

The phone call was successful in a couple of ways: it represents an action that Josie would not have taken before our research partnership. Secondly the phone call had an important payoff as Josie gained information about a possible role for herself in the new organization. It also represents an action that moves into the interpersonal.

Ruth displayed action in a few different ways. One was to use thought stopping to abort unwanted thought, thoughts that would normally run on autopilot, undermining her self-confidence. Another way that Ruth acted was to make tangible moves towards her goals, like posting for two new roles that were outside the scope of jobs that she had pursued in the past.

Regarding the thought stopping, Ruth explained, “About five or six times, like I said, I stopped myself and I really, I didn’t go down [that thought] path and it really felt good.” The value of stopping thoughts was profound for Ruth as the consequences to allowing the thoughts to flow freely are grave:

I gave myself permission to just be who I am. You know what I mean? I don’t have to feel bad because I wasn’t perfect here. I didn’t realize there was so much self-abuse and punishment going on and it carries into everything else that you do.

Ending the self-abuse and punishment had cascading positive effects for Ruth. She felt more self-assured and this in turn led to her posting for jobs outside of her comfort zone. Ruth described her thought process in deciding to post for a new role:

Because I feel more self-assured, I went an extra place with this. . . . The other thing that I examined was my interests. [I thought] “What story have I been telling myself about what interests me in terms of a career?” I delved a little bit more into consulting.

Ruth also took action in the way that she pursued the new job. She sought out an audience with the Vice President to get a sense of how he envisioned the position and to help him understand how her interests are shifting. Like Josie, Ruth took her actions to the interpersonal level.

Reflection. As I stated in chapter 2, I am using reflection to mean to look back upon our actions, to see the new world that has been created and to reconsider what this tells us about our mental models.

Ian exemplified this behavior when he looked back on the way that he and other leaders helped with one supervisor’s career (see Figure 11). Joseph was a strong performer, but had come to a stuck place where he seemed to not want to do anything else with his career and no one thought he could do anything else either. As Ian put it, Joseph “was the poster child for hunker[ing] down.” Ian took decisive action in volunteering Joseph for a temporary assignment outside of his department. Joseph was very successful in the new assignment, but then Ian asked if he could borrow Joseph to help three supervisors on the night shift who were struggling. Joseph agreed to the assignment and also excelled at that. Meanwhile, Joseph’s new department missed him so much that they eventually created a role in their organization for Joseph.

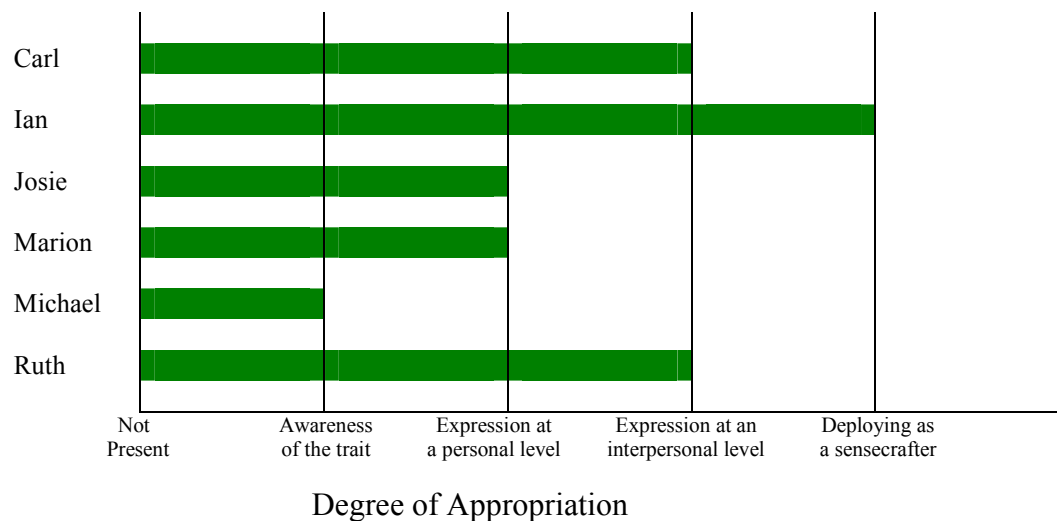


Figure 11. Reflection characteristics demonstrated by participants.

In creating a narrative around what had happened, Ian exhibited his characteristic deliberateness. When Ian discussed the situation with Joseph’s former manager, he said:

Let’s just reflect on that for a moment. Let’s reflect on what we just accomplished in totally changing someone’s future and their career and their perception of their

self worth. Think about the repercussions that's going to have on the organization . . . there's a whole slew of people that used him as an example to justify when they are afraid to do anything different.

For Michael, going through the research process caused him to be reflective.

“Reflection on what is taken for granted. . .” Michael said, reading from the sensecrafting guide. “Certainly don't do enough of that. I take what people say as truth. That's what I do. I think it is certainly a weakness to do that,” Michael continued.

Working with Michael in the study was a little bit difficult because he is so engrained in a particular self-improvement movement. He would occasionally have a breakthrough, only to subsequently discount it. In an earlier example, I recounted how he did this with his fantasy of developing new trading techniques. It happened again when discussing reflection and acknowledging that it would be useful if he did it more. Unfortunately, Michael concluded, “I'm not going to stop doing it [taking what people say as the truth] though, because I'm hardwired.”

Josie embraced the reflection exercises with more openness and this led to some fruitful conclusions. Demonstrating an ability to reflect on her previous actions, and an openness to share her conclusions with me, Josie reported, “I lost the plot line when I listened to the spin and did not attend to the action taken in meetings.” This demonstrates how Josie takes accountability for her actions. Because she does this, she does not slip into a victim mode — here she is focusing on what's under her control.

Josie found the tools to be instrumental in helping her to be more reflective. She normally does do a lot of processing when confronted with something like her situation at work (the integration, questions about her own fit and her health), however, using the exercises that I suggested seem to result in a more productive outcome of the processing. As Josie explained,

My family reported . . . that [surfacing issues for processing] was instant anxiety producing for me. You know what, because I've been trying to sort things out, I normally do lose sleep so it's not like this process created any more sleep-loss than I usually do when I'm trying to weigh things out. I think what was useful for me around it was really the Ladder of Inference. I thought it was really a pretty good process but it was really the authoring and that combined . . . Looking at a model, the assignments that you talked about before and thinking about my process as a mental model, it helped me.

Delving further into how these processes worked for Josie, here she explained the awareness she came to from employing authoring and the Ladder of Inference.

I think what happened for me is that I was able to do those [exercises] about what the data was, what elements caught my eye, and then I was able to sort out what were my feelings, what actions did I take, and I was able to run through that scenario. What I wrote about in there is that because I'm out . . . Because of my knee injury and being out and my age that I started making inferences because of my own anxiety around my knee, my own anxiety about change and being older and dealing with change.

Later, Josie noted, "I came to the conclusion after I was able to get some distance that I am more of a fit still than I thought I was." For Josie, the work had profound implications as she saw a way in which she could potentially be a fit at the County. While Josie had breakthroughs with the process, her reflection remained at a personal level, not the interpersonal level required of the sensecrafting leader.

For Carl, like Josie, the process led to the hope that his workplace could be a more generative place to be. Carl describes the insights he gleaned when he took the time to reflect on all that had taken place:

I kind of sat back and reflect[ed] that my interactions with things [would have been] different than when I thought through the lens of what you are talking about. I would have been much more deliberate in my interactions with things, and it would have been much more effective.

Carl took his reflection beyond the personal by generating questions that he uses that could help others in being reflective: "How are things working out?" "How is this story working out?" "How is this thought process working out?"

In Ruth's case, reflection manifested itself in terms of being more aware of her thought processes. For example, Ruth developed a greater awareness of how her thoughts were affecting her and how she could circumvent negative thinking. Ruth explained:

Any time I made a mistake, especially now, I noticed I'm not really aware . . . You mentioned, pay attention right when you open the door [to the basement, our metaphor for withdrawing from others]. For me, it's a feeling before the thought follows. Or, the feeling is my trigger to [think] "Oh, a thought must have just happened, or some sort of an internal [process]." Then, to make that a pause and work through, "Wait, where are you going right now with this?"

This is an important step for Ruth to abort thinking that she characterized as abusive and punishing. Like Carl, Ruth also brainstormed a list of questions that can help sensecrafting practitioners to be more reflective. Besides the 'Where are you going right now with this?' mentioned above, Ruth came up with: "Where am I at with this at this moment?" "What's my best at this moment?"

Finally, Ruth offered the advice to recognize when you have major paradigm shifts. Ruth found that journaling was an effective tool for facilitating reflection. She has prior experience journaling on a regular basis. Ruth described how her particular technique works:

The other thing that comes to mind with what you're sharing is, one of the things that I did in my practitioner work is we had to journal with ourselves. We had to dialogue with ourselves. Just like how you have the left column and you have the right, you're playing both roles. You're having a conversation with yourself over whatever the matter is. If there's an issue . . . just start writing. Start writing as one, but then ask a question as the other and then write from that [perspective].

Marion's ability to be reflective was evident in the conversations we had together.

Marion exhibited a great deal of self-awareness; the following quote is exemplary:

What I find humbling about the process you've asked me to explore is how much of that I'm bringing to the table. It's one thing to say, "Hey, I can't control that headquarters doesn't get it. They don't respect the field and they have different priorities and they're too busy. I can only influence what I can influence," all that. But when I used some of these tools about mindfulness or being open, I'm really

coming with 80% of it already framed out . . . I'm the one even bringing it. It's not just that I have to navigate it. I'm creating some of that difficulty because I'm bringing the frame that I've built around this topic or this person or this experience because I feel like it's a tool to help me navigate through faster because I'm already armed, I'm already ready. I've come with the tools that are going to help me make this more successful.

Another insight that Marion provided through reflection is how her confidence ties to her thinking. While Ruth was able to change her thinking in order to improve her self-confidence, Marion seemed to be just becoming aware of the connection between her thoughts and her feelings about herself. She explained, "I'm finding that the less certain I am in my workspace, the more I am struggling with assumptions and storytelling."

Marion holds a high standard for herself. For Marion part of the frustration with the process that she was going through (trying to push forward a change to benefit field employees) is that her thought process was not at the level of sophistication she expects for herself. As a result, she condemns herself for not only her lack of progress but also for her thought processes.

When I looked at my left column exercise, that's where a lot of the stories and assumptions came out. . . . It's kind of a little disappointing. I really thought that I had gotten better operating at a higher consciousness level. It's not just assumptions that are neutral. They are more on the negative side of assumptions, which is like I said, that's the humbling part: I really thought I was doing better at that level of thinking.

Being reflective helped Marion to take accountability for her thinking and the role that it is playing in her work relationships. For Marion, the challenge will be to move on from that state to a place where she is able to have a stronger voice in authoring what is going on in her department — similar to the transformation that Josie experienced.

In the preceding sections, I discussed the nine characteristics of a sensecrafting leader and discussed to what extent the six research participants possessed these traits. As I have explicated, it is critical for the sensecrafting leader to not just possess a trait at a

personal level but also to actively use the skill in interacting with others so that the leader may fulfill the collective and deliberate aspects of meaning making in the style of a sensecrafter. While there was plenty evidence that research participants possessed skills at a personal level, only Ian consistently demonstrated sensecrafting skills.

Personal stories. I will now turn the discussion to my secondary research questions, the first of which is: *What stories are individuals telling themselves about their organization and their role within it?* There was an abundance of these stories from the research participants.

While most participants had personal stories that they were telling themselves, Ian was different in that his stories were entirely aimed at the nature of the organization itself. One of the stories that was most motivating for Ian was the belief that “I think our organization forgot how to compete for success, how to have a healthy competitive and collaborative drive.” This story was at the core of many of the actions that Ian is taking to build a new, more competitive culture.

In contrast to Ian, Michael had several personal stories that he told himself. Some of these stories related to his role in the company and his frustration over not being involved in trading. Michael explained:

I foresee this only getting worse because the next thing is to hire a junior trader. The next thing you know, there [are] these traders that see me and have no idea what I’m doing, why I’m doing it, and why I own so much of the company because they are doing all the work. They’re making all the money for us.

He concluded, “It’s just I’ve missed the mark. There was a target, and I was hitting it, and I just missed it. That’s what it feels like.”

Another story that Michael was wrestling with had to do with the ownership structure of the company. He felt that he had not been effective at negotiating his

ownership share. Michael explained, “It’s really hit me now that I have joined the company because I’m seeing how much money there is. I’m like, ‘Holy sh*t! What did I do? I really screwed myself.’” Fortunately for Michael, he has a process for working with his stories and was beginning to come terms with the ownership structure:

I had to shift it recently, and I did in the last few weeks, so I’m grateful. I had to go through that and it was painful to let it go. It was really eating at me. Now I’m like, you know what, that’s fine.

However, the energy with which Michael told the story about the organizational structure belies a lingering attachment to the old story.

The stories that Josie told herself ranged from deliberating over whether she was a fit in her organization to questions about the ethics of the organization. In our first conversation, Josie told me a story about dealing with a difficult co-worker. She needed his input on an important form and he was not cooperating. Josie explained:

No one in his department had the form ready, so I went in and he was really rude to me. I just said, “Well, when can I expect it?” Because it was clear to me that he wasn’t going to get it to me.

Later, after some processing, Josie recognized that she was taking the situation personally.

Josie had a positive story regarding the changes being brought on by the Affordable Care Act, but her attitude was not widely shared. She explained:

I’m not quite as afraid of the model as a lot of people in my county are. Of course, the model here is not a single payer and it’s going to be fraught with a lot of problems, I’m sure, but I’m more optimistic than many people in my county are right now.

Another organizational story that Josie told herself related to the way money is being used at the county. “It’s sort of like Cinderella, you know?” Josie explained:

It’s like, yeah, maybe the riches are there, but somebody’s doing it for their personal gain, sort of feels like it, and the whole idea of computerizing and what

is that really doing? The Feds are coming in trying to look at money and where money goes. So the system could be more humanizing, but in fact it's not there yet.

Perhaps Josie's stories about the organization were influencing her own story about her fit within County Mental Health. Initially Josie "adopted belief that I could not get needs met at county and [should] take action to recommit to private practice and nonprofit set-up." Through processing this information, and acquiring new information by placing at call into work, however, Josie ultimately altered her position and came to see a way in which she might be a fit after all.

Carl's stories were wrapped up in his relationship with his boss, Al. Carl had drawn a conclusion about Al that he was uncooperative and unwilling to see Carl's value. In a typical characterization, Carl reported:

As time has gone by, I've kind of told myself the story that he's not willing to meet me half way or he doesn't have the ability to meet me half way or even consider the value of the way that I think and what that brings to the table.

Over time, this story became more dire:

That story about [Al] not being willing to meet me has kind of evolved to where, you know, from an organization standpoint, telling myself a story that I'm disappointed [with] the organization that they allow somebody of that ilk or train of thought to manage on the people side of the business, which, right or wrong, isn't beneficial, right?

By the time Carl and I started working together, the story had devolved into, "I told myself the story was so bad that I'm out." Fortunately, during our research dialogues, things shifted for Carl and he came to have a new understanding for Al, driven by Carl changing his thinking.

Ruth's stories revolved around herself and her career ambitions. She considers herself a perfectionist and says that she subjects herself to self-abusive, punishing thoughts when her perfectionism is active. As for her career ambitions, initially she was

pursuing one particular job that she had been unable to attain. “This is one of those ways that I pigeon holed myself into certain things.” Ruth explained, “so I am not going to do it anymore. I want to see; in the past I’ve always felt this isn’t the job for me.” Ruth backed up her story with action, applying for two new jobs that in the past she would not have considered.

Marion had stories in two interrelated areas: her general feelings about how things get done in her new organization and her struggles to move a specific initiative forward. Marion’s stories about headquarters were colored by her previous experience as a field leader:

In this role, I am finding that I do have some interesting sets of beliefs from the place I come from, so moving into a part of the organization that, not only have I never worked in, [but] I have been a primary customer of, lends to lots of beliefs. The organizational story is very real relative to the headquarters organization. . . . But I’ve a lot of stories around headquarters personnel and their understanding of the field that it has probably varying degrees of truth.

These beliefs about headquarters included that the organization moved too slow and was too deliberative about moving forward with decisions. Marion felt that the slow pace was having a negative effect on her ability to deliver against her commitments.

The customers I serve want that process [done is better than perfect], but the suppliers that I have to work with to get the decisions made want a much more perfected process. . . . I don’t feel like I have enough deliverables coming out and that’s because it’s taking me so much longer to get a deliverable than I have on my internal clock of how fast I’m going to get things done.

For Marion, delivery of her project is critical because she has a story about her value in her new job being attached to her ability to deliver:

I have made a connection to this proposal—that my getting it approved validates that I am effective in this new role, that an headquarters director should be able to get a policy change [implemented]. That is my job. If I cannot get this done then I am not effective on my job.

With this story, we can see how much Marion has invested in the success of her project and why she feels so frustrated with her colleagues whom she perceives as slowing her down.

We see a diverse set of stories coming from the participants, ranging from rather impersonal stories about the organization (Ian), to stories about the participants' role within the organization (Michael, Josie, Ruth, and Carl) to stories about getting things done within the organization (Marion). It is important to understand the personal stories that an individual is telling herself. This is her starting point before she begins sensecrafting in earnest. If she is telling herself negative stories it may be difficult to turn things around toward a more generative story. In fact, as we would see later, those participants who were most successful with transforming their initial personal stories into something positive seemed most poised to reap positive results from telling better stories (Josie, Ruth and Carl).

Relating to others' stories. In this section I will address the secondary research question: How do leaders relate to other stories present within their organizations? There seemed to be a spectrum of answers to this question: some participants were more interested in creating their own stories than in worrying about existing stories (Ian, Carl, Ruth), others seemed concerned about stories over which they had little control (Michael). For Josie, the stories that concerned her were very wide in scope (how the county was responding to the Affordable Care Act). For Marion, the existing stories were central and something that she was struggling to understand.

While Ian placed most of his energy into creating his own stories, he did encounter a story that needed to be addressed. It came to his attention that a story was circulating about the new senior vice president, Gloria. Ian felt the story was unfounded.

There [are] some perceptions that had emerged that I was aware of about our leader that I didn't think were really true. It was just people had been telling themselves some stories for lack of a better word or just trying to make some assumptions about the points she was focusing on and what it came down to was people didn't believe she was competitive.

Ian tried to influence Gloria concerning what she might want to address in her first meeting with Ian's leadership team. It was not an easy process, as she initially became a little defensive upon hearing how she is perceived. Ian shared stories with her, and collectively they crafted story-based messages that put across the message that Gloria is indeed competitive. Ian was gratified to receive positive feedback on the presentation. Another story that Ian had to confront, discussed earlier, was the perception that he was looking for a younger, more energized work force.

The critical story that Michael encountered came from outside his organization. The hedge fund was looking for institutional investors, but was having trouble gaining buy-in due to the fund's radical (some might even say, unbelievable) success. Michael explained the investors' perspective:

They can't imagine that someone would come up with something that's really good because they aren't at that level for the most part. They can't imagine that our fund made 20% in 2008. You know in 2008 everything collapsed; we made 20%. They don't get it—that's really not in the realm of possibility for them.

Michael finds the situation very frustrating: the fund cannot grow without major infusions from institutional investors, yet the mood in the market is highly skeptical. Michael expounds further on the situation:

It's an automatic invalidation when I walk in, so what I have to do is go through the conversation so they understand that it actually is possible and we did it. That's a bit of a frustration especially when you have folks like Madoff who it just so happened that he made money all the time. We make money all the time, but because he made money all the time now that's a marker of fraud. That's the thing.

Obviously, this particular story is outside of Michael's control—it exists at the industry level. Nonetheless, it has a significant impact on Michael and his company, so it remains a keen source of frustration for him.

The scope of change behind the stories in Josie's workplace is similarly broad and impersonal. Josie describes how the integration is affecting County Mental Health: "we're now moving to an integrated behavioral health system and we've had a lot of antipathy between public health and mental health, and now we have to integrate." At the same time, service providers are trying to adapt to the Affordable Care Act, and as described previously, Josie is more at ease with this legislated transition than are many of her colleagues. Josie explained:

In some programs, you know, we haven't had an integrated healthcare system in this country, so part of the response here is to cobble together money as they come through. It's very crisis management oriented and I think we're moving to a much different model under the Affordable Care Act. So there's some shifts that are in psychology that are also going on.

She continued on to talk about her personal experience of the reactions to the change:

[It's] also frustrating because of things that are said about the program are said out of ignorance, you know? They just haven't seen a working program or had the experience of going to other countries where there are working programs.

Josie conveyed personal optimism about the program changes, but was definitely circumspect about her colleagues' reactions.

While Michael and Josie were confronted with stories of large organizational scope, Marion's struggles were more isolated to her own department and to her internal customers. Marion was attempting to understand why it seemed to be so hard to get her project delivered in her new organization. Marion described the dilemma:

Everybody [in the new department] needs to collaborate, everybody needs to weigh in, you need to present it five times, you need these methodical very slow moves but for some reason people really value that process, I must say. How do I navigate between those? Because my field guys are fine with “done is better than perfect.”

At the same time, while Marion felt that she was under-delivering, she was not receiving any negative feedback in her own department. “I’m not getting any sense at all that they think the deliverables aren’t on track.” Whatever the organizational stories were in headquarters, Marion stood apart from them.

Still the situation was anxiety provoking for Marion for she remembered the judgments that she had cast upon headquarters when she was in the field. As she describes, she has now become subject to those stories:

There are a lot of organizational stories around support roles, so I’m trying to think through . . . but those are really more what I . . . and I don’t know if this would work in that way, but what I feel are the stories or the lens that they’re looking at me at through has changed, and as a result the prejudices or preconceived responses are surprising to me.

Attending to the stories extant in one’s organization is a critical skill for the sensecrafting leader. If the leader wishes to help drive process of collective, deliberate sensemaking, the existing stories serve as the soil into which will be planted new stories and ideas. The leader must have a strong sense of where he wants to take these existing stories; does he want to build on them, reshape them, revise them or rewrite them entirely. The sensecrafter must have an understanding of what is currently circulating in the environment as well as a notion of where he wants to take those stories.

Crafting stories. In this section, I answer the research question: *What stories do leaders craft in order to influence others?* Sensecrafting is defined as deliberate, collective sensemaking, thus the skill of influencing others is at the heart of being a

sensecrafting leader. Storytelling is the key means for engaging in collective sensemaking.

Each of the research participants engaged to some extent in crafting stories with others. Ian used this skill with his leadership team and with his boss, Gloria. Michael engaged in sensecrafting with potential investors. Josie came to the realization that she could influence her director through the use of sensecrafting. Carl employed the skill with his boss and his staff. For Ruth, sensecrafting was a vital skill to persuade interviewers that she was a good fit for the jobs she was seeking. Marion attempted to influence her colleagues.

Ian makes extensive use of stories. When Ian became aware of negative stories circulating about Gloria, he resorted to storytelling to countermand them. Ian engaged Gloria in the process of crafting a presentation, filled with stories, to indirectly address the criticism.

I felt like that was a good opportunity for me to nudge Gloria and just ask her some reflective questions about herself, if she felt like how important this was to her . . . Which metrics did she care about? Actually her initial reaction was pretty defensive which I knew I was going to trigger a little bit because I basically asked her ‘do you care or not? Do you care about how we finish or not?’ Then I told her there’s some perceptions building because she doesn’t talk about results a lot.

This conversation had the desired effect.

Once Gloria knew this is the narrative that people are telling themselves about me and it’s not true, she became quite impassioned about ‘I want to give you some examples of what I really feel and how I really think. And yes, I’m watching the results really closely.’

This is a good example of Ian’s level of skill. He had stories and ideas that he wanted to diffuse across the organization. At the same time a problematic narrative about

his boss had emerged. Ian used his influence to help Gloria craft a presentation that was full of stories to rehabilitate her image with Ian's leadership team. Feedback suggested that the presentation had its intended effects.

In Michael's case, he was up against beliefs that are prevalent in the financial industry—specifically doubt about any fund claiming to always be yielding positive returns. Michael described his process for overcoming objections.

So we have to shift the reality. What do we have to do? We hire a top tier law firm, top tier accounting firm, top tier auditor and those are references so they can ask these guys . . . they go asking who we are. Then our clearing house, our future solutions merchant, the local broker [say] here [are] their numbers. You can call them and you can find out it's for real. When they actually do call them, they invest [in us].

Michael has had some success with this technique, but he still finds the process of securing funding to be painful.

Josie's situation was a little bit different from the other participants since she was out on leave during the time of our research conversations. Nonetheless, Josie was able to do some processing and she received additional data by placing a call into work. While Josie has not yet had an opportunity to take action, she saw the possibility for how she might have more of a voice in the workplace. She reported, "I'm thinking about ways I could impact the way my Mental Health Director is filtering the way he's seeing service delivery and that there could be a niche for me in that process that would meet my needs." This example is powerful because it represents sensecrafting that she wants to engage in with her director. To deliberately engage in sensemaking can remain an individualized process. To make sensemaking collective, however, requires a different skill set and expands the leader's scope of influence.

Carl had two different parties that he was trying to influence: his boss, Al, and his team supervisors. One of Carl's unique responsibilities is readying new customer service agents for the tech floor. The job for the team supervisor is a challenging one since they see a constant rotation of new employees moving through their teams. Theoretically, these newer employees could negatively impact the team's overall metrics. Carl has worked with his leaders to revision how to regard these metrics, focusing on tech floor readiness for the new hires. Carl's response to his team supervisors concerns is:

Listen, totally get that, but it is what it is, and you know what, we have the ability, we have the talent. We are going to be the top-performing department regardless of whether we have a temp staff or a stable staff or we are turning over new hires. We are just going to do what we are capable of doing, and we are going to be the top performing department, hands down. . . . We are not [going to fall] back on 'We are not the top performing department because we are constantly turning over our new people. We are not going there.' In a way, that was kind of changing the story we were telling ourselves.

Carl's philosophy has been borne out by his teams' results.

Paradoxically, at the same time Carl was spreading this message to his leaders, he wanted to get the message to Al that his team supervisors have special challenges and should be measured against a different set of criteria. Carl took special pains to communicate to Al in his language: data. Carl knew that the message had landed when Al defended Carl's employees in a senior leadership meeting: "[Al] just pipes up and said, 'You know, I think unless you have the development supervisors, you don't understand how much work goes into preparing those new employees.'" While Carl was delivering a message of success and a drive for excellence to both parties, it is interesting to note that he actually crafted different messages to Al and to his leaders. He told his leaders not to expect any special dispensation; he underplayed their special situation. For Al, Carl emphasized the uniqueness of his leadership team's task. Sending the two different

messages seemed to work for Carl, and was a unique instance of sensecrafting amongst my research participants.

Ruth's efforts at sensecrafting were almost exclusively aimed at changing leaders' perceptions about her readiness to take on new roles within the organization. Ruth had been focused on securing one promotion in particular, so it was important that she helped others see how she was a good fit for different roles in the organization. As Ruth phrased it, she needed to "help others see what I could do." Ruth accomplished this by requesting informational interviews before the job interviews took place. In particular, she sought out a conversation with the vice president. "I asked to meet with him and get his ideas, his vision of it." Ruth described. "I felt like it was a good, confident way to display how I'm doing and how I see, and learn about how he sees it and how I see the parts of me that could do well in it." She was also sensitive to managing the perceptions of others in the recruiting process: "I knew that it would make a lot of heads turn for some of the managers to see that I am interested in some other things. [It will be good] for them to see me and my abilities in other ways," Ruth explained.

Finally, Ruth calibrated her expectations, realizing that she was entering a process of being considered not just for the open position, but getting herself on the radar for future opportunities:

I shared with [the VP] that that was my secondary goal [being seen as an ambitious leader interested in multiple opportunities] because I believe that there's some potential for other things that could open up. I know that it will help very quickly like, "Hey, what about Ruth for that?"

Like Carl, Marion is trying to influence multiple audiences: her new colleagues and her internal customers in her old department. What is ironic for Marion is that she had a role in shaping some of the expectations that she is now facing from the customer

group. Marion referred repeatedly to the motto “Done is better than perfect.” This is a philosophy that she was involved in inculcating within customer service:

It’s quickly and efficiently done, it’s better than perfect; that’s a moniker that I use and I repeat all the time and my staff would repeat it back that it takes so long to get to perfect that sometimes you’ve lost the value of time. Again, done is better than perfect.

Now this motto almost haunts Marion as she feels unable to deliver against it.

During the time of our research together, Marion was unable to make substantive progress within her new department. Marion described her experiences in trying to get her message across in the new organization: “so it frustrates me because what I want to hear them say is, ‘Wow, we don’t normally deliver at this pace, what can we do to figure out how to balance those two demands to get something different?’” Marion further elaborated:

It’s just a great example of the system of how do I create change for field employees when I’m not sure anyone is dealing in the currency of what improves a field employee’s experience or that operation centers’ business results may not be what drives their decision making motivation.

In the preceding sections, I have covered how the six participants manifested the nine sensecrafting traits. This was followed by an explication of how participants worked with stories. Here we have seen leaders deploying sensecrafting in multiple contexts, trying to influence their supervisors, their colleagues, their teams and even third parties. This represents the collective aspect of sensecrafting, which I define as deliberate, collective sensemaking.

Further development. In this section, I address the final research question: How can leaders further develop the skill of sensecrafting? I posed this question to each of my participants. I received a range of responses: some had a few ideas, and others were caught up in whether their direct reports would have the requisite skill or background to

adopt sensecrafting skills. In general, I did not get as many ideas as I had hoped for from participants regarding further developing the sensecrafting skill in others. I can think of two reasons for this. One may be related to the participants' own skills as sensecrafters: as it turns out they were not generally strong exemplars of sensecrafting leaders. Secondly, since this was the last question I asked, there may have been some research fatigue occurring which served to mute participants' creative thinking. Nonetheless, posing the question about further developing skills was fruitful as a critical technique emerged from my conversation with Carl: the sensecrafting cards. Since this idea arose early in my study, I was able to employ it with subsequent participants to good effect. I will now turn to the specific ideas offered by individuals.

Carl expressed some hesitation about sharing sensecrafting skills with his staff, but for Carl, the resistance came from his belief that the concepts were too esoteric for the mainstream. "I don't know how you would convey that. . . I think that's kind of a little esoteric and difficult for them to kind of grasp," Carl concluded. He did offer up some ideas nonetheless. I share Carl's concerns about some of the techniques being esoteric (e.g., meditation). However, two things push me forward: (a) the only way to advance techniques like meditation in the workplace is to advocate its use and educate people on its practice and benefits, and (b) I see some evidence for a welcoming stance emerging in the workplace (cited in the final section).

For Carl, one important principle was creating a 'story without limits', or an 'empowering story.' It is important to develop the capacity to recognize what kind of story one is telling oneself. Carl asks himself the following questions to determine what kind of story he is telling himself: "It's like step back [from] where you are coming from. Is this going to be helpful or is this empowering or is this limiting? Is this going to impact

negatively my interaction I'm going to have?" Initially, the story about his boss was one of limits:

The difference between a story with limits, which if you just take the story I was telling myself about Al, I put limits on [our] relationship. The story I was telling myself, the limits were here to get me . . . the story I was telling myself is, he wasn't willing to meet me half way. That's just rife with limits. In contrast, the story that I'm telling myself now is empowering from the standpoint of, I look to him, my interactions with him, what he brings to the table was different than what I do. His talents and strengths, his data analysis, his data driven decision making.

Carl felt that the way to involve others in the skills of sensecrafting is through small victories.

They don't see the potential is to change the thoughts about the way things are. If you can get them to do that on a small scale that's not scary, not a lot of ramifications about it, just that something very simple, and they see [how it's] done and it's like, 'holy cow.' Then you get traction, then they start and it's like they see it as a benefit and a tool, and then they start expanding how it's used.

Despite his reservations, Carl made an effort to share sensecrafting with his direct reports. Collectively they found that the best way for them to make use of the skills was to: "just kind of revisit as those opportunities present themselves. To me, that's more effective. That resonates with them much more than if I had like weekly meetings to discuss it." From Carl's experience, the insight that I draw is that I could have provided participants information to help them share the sensecrafting skills with others.

Both Carl and Ruth have experience with contemplative practices, which I believed assisted their ability to readily grasp the materials. Ruth felt that giving would-be sensecrafters skills in meditation and contemplation would be worthwhile. Ruth explained,

It's like meditating and contemplation being very different sometimes, right? Because in meditation a lot of times you're saying the absence of, but with contemplation it's 'I'm setting this time to just allow myself to ponder all the areas of this topic' and then at the end of it you can usually put some structure to it. At first you want to free form it.

A few of the participants mentioned a desire for structure. Ruth had some concrete ideas on the topic:

Honestly, daily reflection. In fact, in my practitioner work, we had to fill out a daily practitioner log every day. We had to fill out what our thoughts were, what our beliefs were, and when they weren't aligned with what we know to be true. Every day.

I developed the 18 cards that discuss techniques based on these conversations about helping people to learn about the skills of sensecrafting. For example, both Ruth and Carl mentioned a desire for structure, and I created the cards in response to that. My intention with each card was to put some of the theory on one side and, on the backside, I wrote questions or described exercises that participants could perform. I gained positive reinforcement from the participants about the use of the cards and found that my later dialogues were more organized because I had the cards to draw from.

Earlier, I spoke about Ian's hesitation with imparting sensecrafting skills to others. He was concerned not only with authenticity, but also that he might be sharing a skill that he feels he particularly excels at: He worried about a selfish tendency to want to keep it private. However, he also experienced awkwardness when even imagining sharing the skill. "It's natural, I think, for you to talk to others and to me about the power of this idea. I don't feel natural about that yet," Ian shared with me. Ian continued on, "I've never really talked to them [my direct reports] about how do you change the way people think through a series of intentional actions," his description providing an eloquent definition of sensecrafting. This stream of conversation led us to a discussion of authenticity. Ian concluded, "There's an integrity component to it or something to ensure these stories are real"; however, we left unresolved the idea about how one helps another to develop and express sensecrafting skills. Ian's concern about authenticity is important.

When one is encouraging another to express the traits of the sensecrafting leader, emphasizing the authenticity of the process is an imperative.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I will conclude the dissertation by briefly discussing the motivation for this study followed by a review of my theory and the results of the research. Additionally, I will explore my findings in relation to the literature on sensemaking. This section will also cover the significance of the research as well as implications for organizations and individuals. Finally, I will provide recommendations based on the findings and suggest further avenues for study on the topic of sensecrafting.

Motivation

In chapter 1, I told the story of the tragedy that occurred at Mann Gulch. I will briefly remind the reader of what occurred that day because it underscores the criticality of sensemaking and served as my motivation in developing the concept of sensecrafting, or deliberate, collective sensemaking. On an August day in 1949, Wagner Dodge led a crew of smoke jumpers to fight a fire that had broken out in the mountains of Montana. The crew was on the ground for less than a few hours when the fire blew up and engulfed the men, killing thirteen of sixteen firefighters. Dodge survived the fire by spontaneously developing a safety innovation; Dodge set his own fire—what is known as an escape fire—and entered into the burning embers it had created. The escape fire robbed the main fire of fuel, thus creating a small safe zone. Dodge, however, was unable to convince a single man to join him in the escape fire, and as a result almost all perished.

Weick's (1993a) case study of the tragedy at Mann Gulch was my introduction to sensemaking. My continuing interest in the topic led me to study sensemaking in this dissertation. Weick argued that sensemaking collapsed that day in Montana; but elsewhere Weick stated that sensemaking never starts and never stops. I argue that sensemaking did not collapse, but rather Dodge was unable to lead others in the creation

of sense in the context of a life-threatening situation. Everyone continued to make sense in the context of his perceived reality, but individuals were no longer sharing sense. For most, I imagine that sense had become: ‘the world is a conflagration and my leader has gone crazy.’ What occurred on that tragic day was a loss of *shared* sensemaking. Nothing in organizational studies can be more important than lives hinging on a leader’s guidance. In fact, many studies of sensemaking cover these sorts of accidents and high-risk situations. Some of the loss of lives that occurred in Mann Gulch could have been averted if the members of the loose knit organization had followed their leader. I wanted to know what Wagner Dodge could have done differently that day. This was my motivation for studying sensemaking and developing what I have termed sensecrafting.

Discussion of Findings and Contextualization

My doctoral studies and literature review led me to develop a framework for the sensecrafting leader as one who possesses nine traits: a learning intention, tolerance for ambiguity, the ability to discern, openness, a sensitivity to framing, mindfulness, envisioning, and the ability to act and to reflect upon one’s actions. To explore my theory, I engaged six leaders from a variety of organizations in a series of three dialogues each. I began the sessions with each of the participants by reviewing my theory, including the nine properties of a sensecrafting leader, and my model of perception (see Figure 1 on page 46).

Processing my research findings took place in stages. Since I engaged in three 1-hour conversations with each participant, there was an opportunity to observe the extent to which participants were exhibiting sensecrafting traits and to ask questions eliciting examples of the target behavior along the way. Each of the sessions was digitally recorded and transcribed. I performed two reviews of each of the transcripts. In the first

review, I looked for themes that emerged in the conversations. A second review of the transcripts was aimed at identifying examples of sensecrafting properties and capturing the stories that were active for the participants. These included stories that the participant told herself, stories that were extant in her organization, and the stories that she attempted to enroll others in.

During the initial research dialogues, I was gratified to receive positive responses to the grounding materials that I provided. Participants seemed to easily grasp my model of perception (see Figure 1 on page 46). They understood the nine properties. Each participant was able to come up with a dominant theme or story that he wished to explore throughout our research dialogues; and in our conversations many examples came out demonstrating their possession of these traits.

Initially my intention was to study the nine sensecrafting traits when they were expressed at the *collective* level. I felt this was important due to the way that I had defined sensecrafting: deliberate, collective sensemaking. A key finding related to the possession of the traits was that it was in fact rare for individuals to express traits at the collective level. Nonetheless, a great deal of benefit came from the sensecrafting traits, even when they were expressed at the personal level. As I shall discuss in this section, and in the Significance and Implications sections, many benefits accrued to participants as they expressed the sensecrafting traits. Before I begin an examination of how the traits benefited participants, I will examine the individual sensecrafting traits and what these meant to the participants.

Different participants seemed to excel at different traits, as has been discussed previously. While all the traits seemed to offer some value, some were more easily appropriated by participants than were others. Using that criterion, *framing* stands out as

being most consistently appropriated while *learning intention* and *envisioning* were the least. In retrospect this finding concerning framing makes sense. Of all the properties, framing also seemed to hold the most interest with sensemaking researchers. It is, after all, an ancient pursuit. Schafer and Toy (1999) referenced Epictetus' wisdom: "People are disturbed, not by events but by their view of those events" (p. 31). Centuries later, Huxley offered a similar observation: "Experience is not what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you" (as cited in Kegan, 1982, p. 11). In other words, it is not the events themselves, but how we frame those events that matters most.

In contrast, learning intention was not directly discussed much in the research dialogues. However, I believe that it was present as a characteristic possessed by my research participants. In Chapter 2 I defined *learning intention* as the willingness to be flexible with one's mental models. From this perspective, all of the research participants were learners. In fact, I do not think that someone without a learning disposition would have invested the time required to participate in my research, as one's mental models were under constant scrutiny. Bateson (1972/1987) defined five different levels of learning. Without exception, the participants exhibited Level II, which Bateson described as "a corrective change in the set of alternatives from which choice is made, or a change in how the sequence of experience is punctuated" (p. 293) and, in some cases, Level III, which "entails perspectives transformation involving a change in the whole assumptive frame of reference within which our habits of expectation have been formed" (p. 293). Despite the fact that the participants did not directly name it, I believe that a learning intention served as an undercurrent for all of our research dialogues.

Tolerating ambiguity is trait that was not readily appropriated by most participants. One person even misconstrued the word ambiguity. My intention with the

term *tolerating ambiguity* is to express an openness to the phenomena that Lewis (2000) described:

Rather than parse organizational life into polar distinctions and rational prescriptions that mask complexity, [researchers] depict the challenges of plurality and change embedded in cognitive, emotional and social processes. . . . A “pedagogy of paradox” may help complicate students’ perceptions of what it means to manage in a turbulent environment. (p. 774)

It is hard to know if someone excels at tolerating ambiguity if they are not currently experiencing it. Furthermore, the irony of ambiguity is that labeling something as such may actually be dependent upon one’s tolerance for ambiguity. If someone has a high tolerance they might not label a stimulus as ambiguous, while someone with a lower threshold might find the same stimulus intolerably ambiguous. In other words, if I am really skilled at dealing with ambiguity, I do not even tend to notice the ambiguity. In any event, *tolerating* may be the wrong term. It may have been more effective to study *embracing* ambiguity.

Discernment is perhaps the trait that I struggled with the most. Discernment works in concert with framing. When one frames, one is discerning what is important to attend to and what is not. Discernment concerns labeling, and distinguishing figure from ground. “Sensemaking is about labeling and categorizing to stabilize the streaming of experience” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 4). Nonetheless, it seems that there might be some word that encapsulates what I intended with both framing and discernment that could help to simplify the model.

Mindfulness, action and reflection all seemed to be fruitful concepts, easily understood and appropriated by participants. In Chapter 2, I characterized mindfulness as being concerned with the *process* of meaning making. Boyatzis and McKee (1995) said that in a state of mindfulness:

Our perceptions are clear, not clouded by our own filters, biases, and unexplored or unacknowledged feelings. Through purposeful, conscious direction of our attention, we are able to see things that might normally pass right by us, giving us access to deeper insight, wisdom, and choices. (p. 120)

Reflection is closely related to mindfulness. One could say that to reflect is the verb paired with the noun or state of being of mindfulness. I believe that what makes mindfulness, action, and reflection so applicable for participants is that each of these traits is associated with concrete actions that one can take. You know when you are being mindful or taking action with a clarity that is not possible with, say, exhibiting a learning intention or tolerating ambiguity. Schwandt (2005) neatly connected the concepts of reflection, action, and mindfulness:

It is the deeper reflection on premises that leads to changes in meaning structures and perspective transformation. Reflective action is predicated on the insights from reflection and leads to mindfulness, as opposed to mindlessness (Langer, 1989), and to a higher reliance on the learner's experience and reflective ability. (p. 181)

The final trait, envisioning, actually began as an afterthought. I had considered that it might be important for the sensecrafting leader to articulate a final destination toward which all the other properties were driving. Using the metaphor of maps to characterize envisioning, Stacey (1992) noted research that indicates that the early demise of organizations often is the result of managing based on existing maps, which leads to imitation, repetition, and excess. Palus and Horth (2002) agreed, stating, "The old rules were about following maps. The new rules are about making the maps-and often the compasses as well" (p. 49).

Although it seems logical that leaders would engage in envisioning, it was one of the least appropriated traits. I intentionally selected a wide array of types of leaders in my study, from supervisor to chief operating officer. Obviously these leaders have different

levels of organizational power and when they envision, the loftiness of their vision varies. This makes sense given the nature of the sphere of influence and control for each. It is generally true that those occupying the highest levels of organizational hierarchy (Ian and Michael) spoke the most about vision, although this is not a steadfast rule. Josie, a supervisor, was very concerned with the integration of departments at her county and had plenty of ideas about how the county could cope with legislative requirements. Meanwhile, Marion, a director, focused on something that was a more personal issue. In any event, it is dangerous to quantify responses with my limited sample size. For whatever reason, envisioning was generally not a topic that participants chose to raise.

Beyond the question of their appropriation of the nine sensecrafting traits, the skills and capabilities associated with the sensecrafting leader were viewed as useful for the participants. For some, the skills made significant differences in how they engaged in their work and the results they experienced. For Carl, the biggest difference came in simply being more conscious of his thoughts. That process is supported in many places in the sensecrafting materials. I believe that Carl, as an early participant, pulled largely from the participant guidebook where he would have found information on working with assumptions, the model of perception, the research tool “frame experimentation” and the techniques of reflection and journaling. For Carl, being more conscious of his thoughts led to an improved relationship with his boss, and that in turn led to his decision to stay on with his employer.

Using sensecrafting skills led to two important results for Ruth: she was able to dampen her perfectionist quality and to challenge her assumptions about various job opportunities. The two, working in tandem, led Ruth to apply for jobs she had not pursued in the past. Some of the most significant behavioral changes came as a result of

my coaching during our interactions. For example, I gave Ruth a metaphor of “opening the door to the basement” when her thoughts were turning unproductive. This, along with the participant guide, was helpful in altering Ruth’s behavior. Ruth responded favorably to further coaching: for example, she embraced the idea that she would need to alter the stories of others in order to be successful in her job search and she worked this in to her job posting process. The use of these skills made a significant difference for Ruth: while she did not secure the openings that she was pursuing, she did meet her goal, which was to simply get her name out there as a candidate for different types of positions.

For Josie, our work together made a significant difference in that she came to see how there could possibly be a role for her at County. This was important because events at work were leading her to question her fit. The work that I did with Josie had a qualitative difference from the work that I did with Carl and Ruth. With the first two, I did not have the sensecrafting cards (recall that Carl helped me realize the need for cards). As a result, Josie’s interactions were more structured than Carl and Ruth’s were. Josie worked with the Ladder of Inference, journal writing, authoring, and archetypes. Josie expressed satisfaction with the card technique and reported that there were not too many cards as long as I guided the participant through them.

In this section, I have briefly discussed the overall results of my research and attempted to place those findings into context within the literature. Next, I continue the discussion of findings with a consideration of the significance of the research.

Significance

As indicated above, benefits accrued to the participants even when they were not expressing the traits at the collective level. This suggests that there is a strong mandate for sensecrafting. From my observations, participants valued different parts of the

sensecrafting model. Ruth seemed to value discernment and mindfulness. As an empathic person, she used discernment to separate her energy from others. Carl valued openness, mindfulness, and reflection. I say this mostly on account of the approaches that he employed before our work together (those approaches that Carl felt were too esoteric for the mainstream). The main aspect that Michael seemed to embrace was envisioning. For Marion, learning, openness and framing seemed most important. Marion did a lot of work with her assumptions using the framing model. Josie seemed to value discernment, framing, action and reflection. And finally Ian, seemed most to value learning, framing, envisioning, action and stories. No one participant valued all nine of the traits. This has sparked for me a different way of thinking about these traits. Originally, I envisioned a sensecrafting leader as possessing all nine traits. Now I am thinking more in terms of styles of sensecrafting. This leads to a different question: “how do leaders express their sensecrafting?”

Beyond their experiences with the traits themselves, the participants experienced additional learning and growth. Marion spoke about the humility of realizing that she was bringing lots of assumptions to the interaction with her colleague. This realization was facilitated by using tools like the Left Handed Column. I believe the first step in changing a behavior is becoming aware of its existence. While Marion did not liberate herself from her assumptions during our time together, the fact that she became aware of how her own assumptions were effecting her business interactions is a powerful starting point for change.

Ruth experienced a transformation in how she made decisions. For example, as Ruth describes, “there were two or three mistakes that would have happened no matter what within our department, but I stopped myself from really going into

overcompensating and being perfect in correcting it.” Instead of, in Ruth’s words, becoming “overly defensive” she just “owned it” and “rolled with it.” Ruth also took the additional step of having a conversation with her manager about the different behaviors the manager might be witnessing and why she might be seeing these from Ruth.

For Carl, sensecrafting was helpful to how he did his job in that it facilitated his remembering techniques that were useful to him (such as being grounded and changing his thoughts about his manager, Al, and learning to use Al’s language, such as Excel). Another way in which his efforts at sensecrafting assisted him on the job was being able to win Al over to his side with regard to how to evaluate Carl’s employees.

In Josie’s case, the sensecrafting approach helped her to articulate the different forces at play in her workplace. I believe this was helpful because once Josie had this language, she was in a position to be more of an author than subject to the dominant story lines at work. This was most plain in regard to her role in the organization. Our work together inspired Josie to make a phone call in which she realized there could indeed not only be a fit for her at work, but also a possible path to having a voice in the changes.

For Ian, he expressed leadership through storytelling, using the power of story to educate people on the culture he wanted to establish. In true sensecrafter fashion, he helped others to understand and respond to situations, such as with the employee who others believed had topped out in his career.

I personally had the most learning around Ian’s use of stories. Ian used stories to drive cultural values, to exemplify desired behavior and to inspire people to try new things. The nature of the other participants’ stories was qualitatively different. For the most part they were either subject to the stories that they told me about, or they told me about stories of a personal nature that they had not yet found a way to share collectively

with positive effect. Carl, and his stories about the way that his supervisors should be evaluated, was one exception. I think the value of collectively sharing stories is evident from the experiences of Carl and Ian, both of whom were able to drive change through their stories. I have discussed the mandate for sensecrafting on the basis of value to the research participants. There is a strong mandate for sensecrafting leaders in the literature as well.

According to Bennet and Bennet (2004):

Over the past half-century the industrial age has gradually given way to the information age and we are now entering the age of complexity. Information has exploded to the point where it is often detrimental to decision-making. As we approach a fully networked, dynamic, and turbulent local, national, and global society and business landscape we find that only knowledge can provide the understanding needed to deal with this complexity. Such a milieu demands a different paradigm and new rules and roles for leaders and managers. (p. 131)

Others are more explicit about the leadership traits needed to deal with the new sorts of organizations and organizational challenges that are currently facing us. IBM's 2010 chief executive officer study reported, "CEOs are telling us that the complexity of operating in an increasingly volatile and uncertain world is their primary challenge." IBM's (2012) chief executive officer study reveals "CEOs are prioritizing the creation of more impactful connections with their employees, their customers and their partners." Kegan and Lahey (2009) asserted, "The leader of today may need to be a person who is making meaning with a self-transforming mind." (Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 8). I argue that the concept of the sensecrafting leader provides a response to the call for new roles and new rules for leaders to take up the challenge of working in greater complexity. I do not claim that sensecrafting is the entirety of the solution, but it is a good place to start. In chapter 1, I defined what is being called for as the following:

1. New ways of seeing to perceive our interconnectedness. For the sensecrafting leader, a premium is placed upon looking again, or reconnaissance. The sensecrafter does not look once and then assume to have perceived all that is important. She understands that her criteria for what is important can change, and will change the way she will perceive. Furthermore she is open to having missed something.
2. The ability to transform mindsets. The sensecrafting leader is sensitive to how one's assumptions shape our perceptions. I have discussed this in the trait Framing. It is a critical skill for the sensecrafting leader to understand how mindsets shape perception and to have the mental dexterity to flex those mindsets that are do not reflect a desired reality.
3. Being collectively attuned to interior conditions. Sensecrafting is by definition a collective enterprise. Through mindfulness, the sensecrafting leader attunes not just to exterior conditions, but interior conditions as well, with the realization that interior conditions are the ground in which we plant our hopes and dreams and these interior conditions are critical to ultimate outcomes.
4. The capacity to facilitate process, foster relationships, and to nurture growth. Sensecrafters are inherently concerned about relationship, as they are trying to create collective sense. The traits of action and envisioning speak to the sensecrafter's concern with facilitating process and nurturing growth.

I believe that Drath and Palus (1994) would agree about the importance of sensemaking, given their argument that “[P]eople in positions of authority might be better equipped for their role in the leadership process if they were to become aware of the underlying process of meaning-making by which they gain their authority and are granted their influence” (p. 17). Many aspects of my sensecrafting study helped participants to become conscious of the underlying process of meaning-making. For example, my model of perception (see Figure 1 on page 46) is an illustration of how I believe the sensemaking process unfolds. Furthermore, working through my nine traits of a sensecrafting leader, and the cards that I developed, were both aimed at bringing something that normally operates at an unconscious level (sensemaking) to a conscious level.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) stated that we have enough lists of traits of what our leaders need to be and a paucity of ways that they should develop the requisite skills. Together with my research participants, I sought with this dissertation to close that gap between lists of traits and how those traits should be developed. The 18 cards that I developed each articulate exercises or questions that leaders can engage in to practice the skills of the sensecrafting leader. The content of the cards is not entirely novel (though some of it is); it is culled from resources such as Isaacs (1999); Palus and Horth (2002); Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Smith, and Ross (2004); and Weick (1990).

Maitlis (2005) pointed to another need within the sensemaking literature.

Referring to her own study, Maitlis stated:

[T]his research largely ignores the interaction of different actors' sensemaking behaviors and how this interaction affects sensemaking processes. While previous studies provide insight into some of the strategies that leaders and stakeholders each use to shape organizational understandings and accounts of issues, they have primarily focused on the role played by just one party or the other. Thus, relatively little is known about the dynamics of sensemaking when different parties engage simultaneously or reciprocally in such activities, or about the ways in which the accounts they generate are reconciled-- or are not reconciled (p. 22).

This dissertation contributes to closing the gap that Maitlis (2005) identified, by explicitly conceptualizing organizations as sets of competing stories. The polyphony of stories present in organizations was considered directly with each of the participants:

- Josie (her story versus the organization in general)
- Ian (his story versus those held by members of his leadership team)
- Marion (her story versus the stories active within her new and old organizations)
- Michael (his story versus the stories held by his partner and by the investment community)
- Carl (his story versus Al's story)

- Ruth (her story versus how others in the organization viewed Ruth as a leader)

The skills of a sensecrafting leader are tailored to become aware of the polyphony of stories present in any organizational system and to put forth one's own sensemaking product.

Implications

As discussed previously, the intention with my study was to examine participants who were demonstrating sensecrafting traits at the collective level. A surprising finding was that while sensecrafting traits were frequently expressed, it was rare for them to be expressed at a *collective* level. Nonetheless, as I have continued to work through the data, I have had a few important realizations, including: there is a great deal of benefit for the individual that possesses the sensecrafting traits at any level; my participants possess tremendous potential to be sensecrafting leaders; and my chosen lens (looking for all nine sensecrafting traits to be expressed at a collective level) may have been overly optimistic, recognizing that the process of becoming a sensecrafting leader is developmental. .

Potential. Having, and demonstrating, the skill at a personal level can be an important precursor to developing and demonstrating the skill at a collective level, which in turn is how I define a sensecrafting leader-- someone who wishes to be a deliberate, *collective* sensemaker. Therefore, I conclude that my participants possessed a great deal of potential to develop into sensecrafters.

Benefits. I believe that the research process was a learning event for each of the participants. Most learned new skills; some had a reawakening of previous training; others had validation that they were on the right course; some became aware of existing challenges and new possibilities. I discussed many of the benefits for individuals in previous sections. In this section, I will consider the benefits to organizations.

Leaders are, by the very nature of their role, sensemakers for others in the organization. “When leaders act they punctuate contexts in ways that provide a focus for the creation of meaning. Their action isolates an element of experience, which can be interpreted in terms of the context in which it is set” (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, pp. 261-262). Sensemaking is a natural part of leading. The organization and the leader can only benefit when they engage that natural sensemaking deliberately and collectively.

There are at least three ways that organizations benefit from having leaders sharpen their sensecrafting skills. First, organizations reap the benefit of leaders who become more engaged in their work through the sensecrafting process. For each of my study participants, I believe that the organization benefited from the sensecrafting work that their employees engaged in. We saw in the case of both Carl and Josie how this process led each to find a fit within their workplace where they had begun to doubt that they had a place. Carl had actually set a departure date for leaving his organization. Based on our work together, however, he came to have different thoughts about his boss, Al, and this different way of thinking led to Carl seeing and experiencing Al in a new way. Ultimately Carl decided to stay. Josie also had doubts about her fit. Through the processing that she did as a part of our sensecrafting dialogues, Josie saw a path to remaining in the organization and possibly even having an impact on the issues that were most important to her. Marion, Michael and Ruth all indicated that the process was helpful for them. From the organization’s perspective, it would be helpful to have a process and a set of tools to help individuals deal with various issues (Marion—becoming acclimated to a new department and driving results in her new role; Michael—becoming aware of his dissatisfaction with his role and beginning to sort through the issue in a constructive way; Ruth—pursuing new opportunities and focusing on the way she is

showing up at work). Each of these individuals was working on improvement areas that would not only have benefit for them personally but for the organization as well. Ian valued being able to spend what he called “Q2 time” with me. Q2 is a reference to Covey’s (1989/2013) time management principle. It represents those tasks that are most important to us, but not urgent. Since these tasks are not urgent, they tend to be set aside in favor of tasks that are urgent, even unimportant ones. Covey says that Q2 is the place where most people need to invest more time. It also refers to the tasks that have the most value to offer. My work together with Ian brought to conscious awareness exactly how Ian was approaching his change efforts. For a leader with skills like Ian’s, sensecrafting, and the materials associated with it, can be of assistance in coaching others. Or the materials can be used to reflect upon specific issues, which is how Ian employed the 18 cards.

Second, sensecrafting leaders are more attuned to actively helping their teams create meaning and are attuned toward publicly developed shared sense. When the leader takes the time to engage in this behavior, the organization benefits. We can see how damaging the absence of this behavior was at Mann Gulch. As the afternoon wore on, Wagner Dodge, an experienced fire fighter, was constantly revising his take on the fire and conditions on the mountain, but he did not share this information directly. Instead he issued commands. Unfortunately, the commands were ignored. Weick (1993a), who examined the case in detail, concluded that the commands were ignored due to a lack of context—the orders did not make sense and crew members followed their own sense of the situation rather than following what seemed to be non-sensical orders. In this case, lack of shared sense had devastating consequences for the fire crew; the stakes were life or death.

Third, sensecrafting leaders are particularly attuned to uncovering the assumptions that underlies their thinking. The tendencies to surface assumptions can likely lead to contagious behavior, as the sensecrafting leader not only states her own assumptions, but also engages in inquiry aimed at surfacing others' assumptions. This will be healthy behavior for the organization, allowing individuals to have deeper, more meaningful conversations as they move beyond surface concerns that may hide the real issues. Coach Tim Gallwey (1977), renown for applying skills his sports-coaching skills in business settings simply would state: "Awareness is curative." Isaacs (1999) expanded on Gallwey's comment, explaining that people begin to change and ease their own self-imposed obstacles as they grow to realize how they unintentionally undermine themselves.

There were additional specific benefits that accrued for the organizations involved. I have already mentioned the two cases where organizations retained employees that the organization did not even realize were flight risks. At a third organization, an employee (Michael) became conscious of his dissatisfaction with his role and began to think about ways to address it constructively (as opposed, in his words, to "taking drastic action"). In another organization, a leader (Ian), skillfully navigated the situation when he learned that employees were saying that his boss, Gloria, was not competitive enough. Marion's organization benefited because she was applying specific tools to deal with her frustrations in working with an uncooperative colleague. Though Marion had not brought her issue to resolution, she was becoming conscious of the ways in which she contributed to the difficulties with her colleague. For Ruth's organization, they benefited from the study by having a valued employee proactively working on issues like perfectionism and a tendency to be withdrawn. In each case, I believe that a final key

benefit for the organization was that sensecrafting helped minority voices to achieve expression. Having discussed how sensecrafting benefits organizations, I now turn to a consideration of a different approach to measuring and evaluating sensecrafting in the hope of more readily unleashing these traits in others.

Lens. Based upon my findings, I have now come to believe that studying sensecrafting styles might be a more tangible way of thinking about the sensecrafting traits. Incorporating such an instrument into the sensecrafting development process has several implications for how others would be trained and developed on sensecrafting.

Assuming further research bears it out, I would arrange my training plan around sensecrafting styles. In this approach, I envision developing an instrument that informs participants what are their dominant and their least used sensecrafting skills. I would outline benefits of using those skills at which one excels the most, along with the benefits of developing the lesser-used skills. This may be a more efficient way to gain value from the model and to make it more palatable to corporate trainers. I would focus separately on the storytelling aspect of sensecrafting. For non-managers, I would develop a separate series of training focused on teaching non-leaders how to operate in a sensecrafting environment.

In retrospect, approaches to how leaders can train others on sensecrafting was a weakness of my study. In order to help managers lead and train their teams to do and improve their jobs, material would need to be developed to help leaders facilitate this process. I believe that overhauling the material to focus on sensecrafting style will be of great benefit not only to leaders who wish to impart the skills, but also to learners who wish to study the nature of a sensecrafting leader and who desire to develop their own skills.

Finally, my hope is that the method could be offered to individuals and organizations as a coaching process. The coaching could be commissioned by the individual or sponsored by the organization, however there are potential risks attendant with the organization as sponsor. It would be important to ensure that sharing outcomes beyond the coaching dyad remains within the province of the individual. Any coercion in participating or sharing results with members of the organization would undermine the integrity of the process. If the individual were compelled to share outcomes or process a chilling effect would be likely. At the same time, the individual may choose to share with others their participation in coaching. In fact, in the study, I found that many participants were enthusiastic about sharing their participation with others. In one case, a newer participant was primed for the study after hearing about others' experiences. This created a unique dynamic for this particular participant because her expectations were influenced by what she had heard from others.

Limitations

My intention with this research was to investigate whether a set of individual leaders demonstrated the nine characteristics of a sensecrafting leader. Secondary avenues of investigation included what sorts of stories are active in the individual's organization, what types of stories the individual tells herself and what stories she crafts in order to influence others.

While some might consider it a limitation for the researcher to know the participants, I believe that it is not a problem in the paradigm of action research. Drawing on Coghlan and Brannick (2004) for example, two of the characteristic features of action research are achieving *change in action*, rather than research *about action*, and a "collaborative democratic partnership" (p. 3). In my estimation, both of these

characteristics are actually easier to achieve in the context of an existing relationship between researcher and participant. I selected my research participants with the belief that they would be comfortable with the research modality. While my sample was diverse from some aspects (work experience, age, gender, organizational title) it was not diverse from the perspective of education, race or ethnicity. Participants were selected because I knew them, and I held a belief that they would be comfortable with the intellectual demands of the study: specifically, the humility and prowess to explore their mental models. With a limited sample size (six participants) I did not attempt to create diversity on all variables. This is a qualitative study and each of the six participants constituted a case study, which enabled a deep dive into their experience with the sensecrafting process. Because of the time limitations of my study (I worked with each participant for roughly a 2-month period), it is difficult to track long-term effects. While there was the opportunity for ideas to germinate between dialogues, I did not establish a mechanism for further follow-up after the completion of our three research dialogues.

The study is replicable and I have attempted to provide sufficient detail should someone wish to repeat the study. In this section, I have discussed the limitations of my study. I now turn to implications for future research.

Future Research

The findings of this dissertation suggest avenues for further research. As has been discussed elsewhere, one of the most critical areas for further research would be to examine the possibility of thinking in terms of sensecrafting styles. Such an approach would involve the use of an instrument that could assess an individual's strengths and weaknesses on each of the nine sensecrafting traits. Each trait would be viewed on a spectrum, and the participant would be informed of their dominant traits as well as their

least-used traits. I believe that having such an instrument would facilitate the process of developing techniques to help individuals' strengthen their skills. Additionally, I would like to test the validity of the eighteen sensecrafting cards, with the aim of possibly narrowing them down or tying them to specific sensecrafting traits.

One possible area of inquiry would be to conduct research with participants who are not as savvy when it comes to transformative learning. This would be helpful because it would uncover how to give a broader set of leaders the skills of the sensecrafter.

Another area of exploration could be to make more of an effort for leaders/participants to share certain skills with their employees, such as mindfulness. A few of the participants had expressed some reluctance in discussing issues like meditation in the workplace, yet some trends suggest that it is becoming increasingly acceptable. Google, for example, has a well-known meditation program (Timm, 2010), and the program's proponent, Chade-Meng Tan (head of personal growth at the innovative search engine), aspires for Google to set an example for other companies to follow. And, a recent study at Stanford University (Castellano, 2014) revealed the positive effects of Compassion Training (which includes meditation).

Another possible venue for future studies is to have research participants work in groups. This could take the shape of intact teams working on real world problems, employing the sensecrafting on shared issues. This type of research would have merit because it would put the emphasis on the creation of shared meaning and would allow for the exploration of that shared meaning from multiple viewpoints.

Another element of exploration would be geographic dispersion. If group work were utilized, it could be in one of two settings: a co-located team, or a geographically

dispersed team. For the non-co-located team, the impacts of geographic dispersion and the role of technology could be explored.

A possible area for further exploration would be to scrutinize the nine sensecrafting traits themselves. I defined these attributes through research and did some preliminary validation of them in Swanson (2009). However, as discussed above, there is still some need for refinement in the precision of the terms. In particular, the distinction between framing and discernment could use further definition. Likewise, tolerating ambiguity could benefit from further exploration (is the proper term *embracing* ambiguity; how does one recognize the trait of embracing ambiguity?)

Another pursuit that may have merit would be to look for individuals who are exemplars of one or more sensecrafting traits and studying how these individuals came to possess and express the trait. Research could then take the form of how we can develop others on these traits.

A final area for future investigation would be to explore organizational impacts of the sensecrafting leader using a study that involved a 360-degree component could achieve this end. By including the perspectives of direct reports, peers and the supervisor, we could learn what impact the sensecrafting leader actually has on the organization.

Conclusion

The process of performing a literature review, conducting research, and writing this dissertation was personally a transformative experience. I learned about HPR, a novel ways to conduct research, read and digested the works of dozens of organizational scholars and had the opportunity to explore in more depth the haunting case of Mann Gulch, documented by Weick (1993a) in more detail. Foremost in the experience was engaging in a prolonged research dialogue with six dynamic and thoughtful leaders. I am

deeply indebted to my six research participants for their generous donation of time and for their honest and personal explorations of issues very close to them. Through their dedication, collectively we built a body of knowledge that can have impact beyond this study.

Each of the participants expressed that they had benefited from being a part of the study. Josie was most effusive, stating that she had valued the process itself, specifically the sensecrafting cards and the coaching on them; working in discrete chunks of information (e.g., picking two or three items of focus upon); and that the process had the effect of making things more conscious. Michael found the greatest value in opening up something that needs to be explored (his role within his organization). Both Ian and Ruth found the process of interaction most valuable, Ian stating that it “makes me feel calm and reminds me of what I’m trying to accomplish” and Ruth describing the experience as “wonderful coaching.” Marion said that she found the sensecrafting cards most valuable. For Carl, the experience itself was transformative: “I’m thrilled to death and I couldn’t thank you enough for thinking about including me and every chat we’ve had, I’ve enjoyed immensely, so look forward to more,” he stated, referring to how his participation had helped him transform his relationship with his boss Al.

Their experience leaves me optimistic that the effort to be a sensecrafting leader is a worthwhile pursuit that will provide practitioners with a powerful set of leadership characteristics. The materials that I developed in the course of research can further assist interested leaders in manifesting or enhancing the sensecrafting leader’s traits.

We are at a time in history when a new form of leadership is demanded. We have transitioned out of the Industrial Age into a new age, which is known by various names. I prefer the term *Conceptual Age*, because it suggests that the prime commodities that we

trade in are ideas and thoughts. The skills of the sensecrafting leader fit in nicely in this new age. The sensecrafter trades in stories and his special skill is to be an expert in recognizing and shifting mental models. He appreciates how mental models dictate what he perceives and he knows that it is critical for him to be constantly vigilant with his own mental models, mustering the intellectual dexterity to bring them to consciousness and revise them as needed. As Weick (1990) described it, “Lowering one’s defenses, seeing fully, looking again at things one considers already understood, capturing previously undetected nuances, and developing high-variety languages to describe what is discovered” (p. 313).

In my study, I was gratified to work with individuals who possessed the courage to put their mental models in play. Together we explored ways to bring mental models to consciousness and to deliberately alter them. In most organizations, the skills of a sensecrafting leader are not true life and death issues like those faced by Wagner Dodge at Mann Gulch, or Captain Sullenberger’s courageous act on the Hudson River, or President’s Obama’s decision making in the assassination of Osama bin Laden. But survival is at stake nonetheless. It includes the obvious issues like the success of a company, and the preservation, even creation of jobs. But perhaps most important is the individual’s level of engagement and their ability to find and keep work aligned with their deepest values and sense of dignity.

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Appendix A: Participant Guidebook



MOTIVATING QUESTION

People are constantly telling themselves stories. But what is the nature of these stories?

- Do they help bring about positive outcomes?
- Do they reinforce negative attitudes and behaviors?
- What happens in an organization which could be thought of as collections of (possibly competing) stories?
- How can organizations help their members to tell themselves better stories, stories that lead to desired outcomes and behavior?

SENSEMAKING & SENSECRAFTING

Sensemaking is about making the non-sensical make sense.

Sensecrafting is about doing so deliberately and engaging others in the process.

3

BACKGROUND: SENSEMAKING

Sensecrafting is a variant of Sensemaking. Sensemaking is a phenomenon that appears in Organizational Development research. Typical topics of exploration in Sensemaking are disasters or other events of major significance.

Karl Weick defined seven properties of Sensemaking:

- Grounded in identity construction
- Retrospective
- Enactive of sensible environments
- Social
- Ongoing
- Focused on and by extracted cues
- Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy

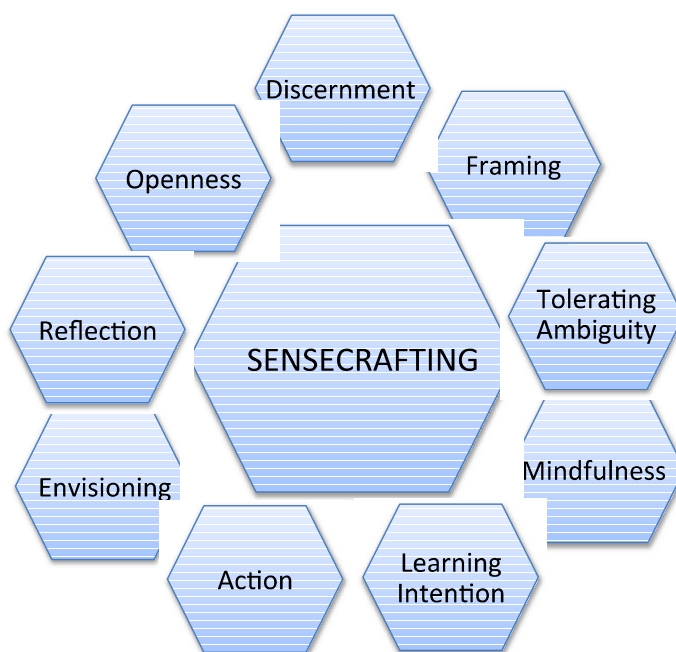
Sensemaking is an investigation of “how [people] construct what they construct, why, and with what effects.” (Weick, 1995)

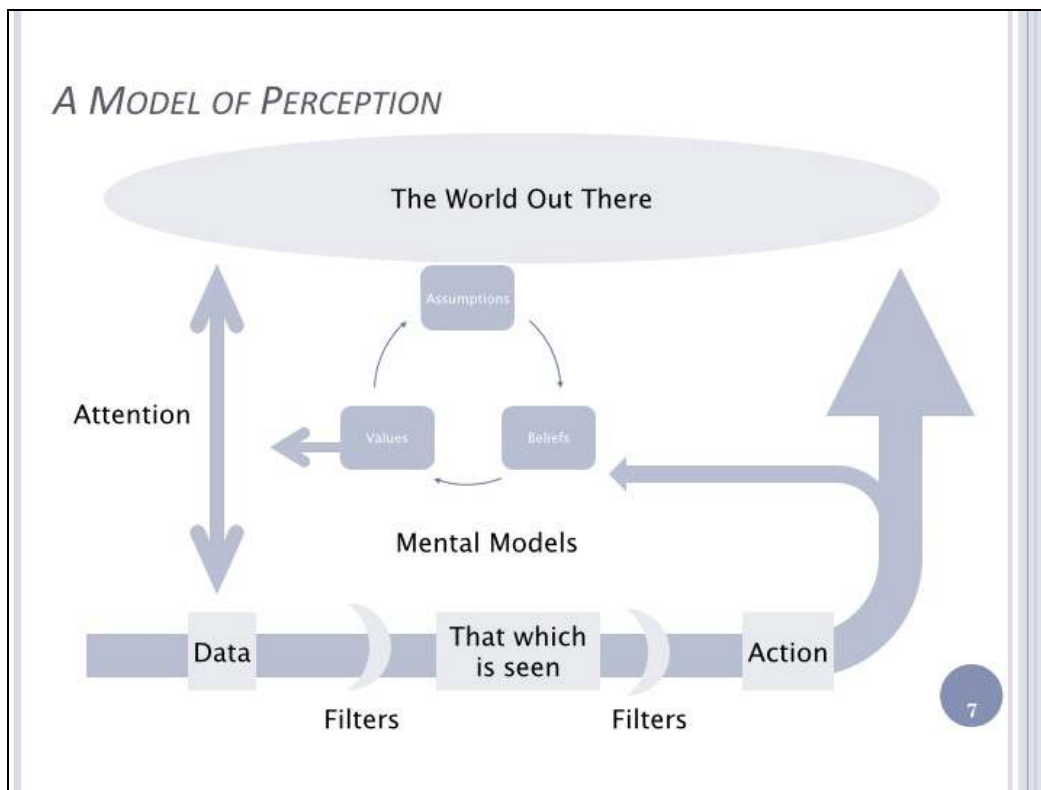
4

MY ASSUMPTIONS

- Though we are often unaware of it, our thoughts shape, even create, our reality (Bruner, 1986)
- A sense of meaning and purpose is vital to any human pursuit
- Organizations are stronger when they have processes that give voice to and engage the hearts and minds of all their members (MacGregor, 2000; Blanchard, 2007)
- We are by nature storytellers. Story is the major unifying structure through which we tend to organize experience (Boje, 2001)

QUALITIES OF SENSECRAFTING





RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Hermeneutic Participatory Research

- Engaging with others in a self-reflective way to examine their actions and underlying mental models
- Using conversations (between researcher and participant) as a primary means for capturing accounts and practicing and refining techniques
- Testing perceptions and assumptions through the use of action-experiments

Action Research

"Action reaction is less a separate culture of inquiry than it is a statement of intention and values. The intention is to influence or change a system, and the value are those of participation, self-determination, empowerment through knowledge, and change." (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998)

RESEARCH PROCESS



9

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Narrative Analysis

An exploration of:

- The stories I tell myself about myself
- The stories I tell myself about others
- The stories others tell themselves

Enablers

- Bringing to consciousness that which often operates below the level of awareness
- Gaining insight into our perceptions
- Double loop learning

10

RESEARCH TOOLS

Storycatching⁵

A storycatcher works deliberately with people to help them make sense of their experience

- The storycatcher is intrigued “with making—perhaps driven to make—sense of experience and to make stories out of our sense.”⁵
- “Listening for what is being reinforced, shifted, changed, sustained, ignored, or undermined.”⁵

Frame Experimentation

“bringing a different perspective to the fore and trying it out on a situation to see what we might learn”⁶

- Testing of assumptions, values and beliefs
- Restructuring frames as needed based on new data

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⁵ Baldwin, 2005 ⁶ Isaacs, 1999

RESEARCH TOOLS (CONT.)

Reflection

- Examining the premises behind assumptions
- Questioning the validity of what is taken for granted

Suspension

- Making our thinking transparent to allow others to see and understand it
- Identifying and holding assumptions up for inspection

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RESEARCH TOOLS (CONT.)

Ladder of Inference

- A tool to help individuals understand the meanings, assumptions and beliefs that they hold below of their awareness.

Left Hand Column

- A tool to help individuals explore their tacit assumptions by dissecting a previous interaction.

Journaling

- Participants will maintain journals to capture their thoughts and experience between sessions and to capture the results of our micro-experiments.

Appendix B: Engagement Guide

1.0 Candidate Screening

1.1 After showing and explaining my model of perception (Figure 1), I will ask the following:

Does the model make sense to you? Why? What doesn't fit for you? Does the model help you think about things in a different way? How so?

1.2 Mental Models are a key component to the framework. What experience do you have in working with mental models? Have you experienced situations that caused you to revise your underlying assumptions? What were these experiences like, e.g., how did they arise? What did you question? Did it cause you to change your perspective? What is your reaction to the idea of challenging mental models?

1.3 I will provide some background on the concept of transformative learning, and then ask: What personal experiences do you have with transformative learning? What precipitated the learning? What shifted as a result of the learning?

1.4 Have you ever embarked in a conscious effort to challenge mental models or engage in transformative learning? Please describe this.

2.0 Part I: Opening

2.1 What metaphor would you use to describe your organization?

2.2 What are stories of people who get rewarded or punished?

2.3 How would you describe the communication in this organization? Are people able to be open and honest? Why or why not?

2.4 What frustrates you at work (with your team/department, etc)?

2.4.1 What patterns of behavior do you see that create difficulty in getting the work done effectively and efficiently? What reinforces these patterns of behavior? Who has the ability to change these patterns?

2.5 What successes do you and your team/department have at work?

2.6 Employ questions from Freedman & Combs (1996) as appropriate:

Deconstruction: Bringing forth problematic beliefs, practices, feelings, and attitudes

Opening space: Unique outcomes, hypothetical experience questions, different points of view, future oriented questions

Preference

Story development: Process, details, time, context, people, hypothetical event questions

Meaning: Meaning and implications; characteristics and qualities; motivations, hopes, and goals; values and beliefs; knowledge and learnings

Part II: Exploring

- 3.1 Competing stories can be identified by a situation where the meaning or significance that people attribute to events differ.
 - 3.1.1 Where, in your organization, might you detect the existence of competing stories?
 - 3.1.2 What in your organization do you not understand? Where might you have lost the plot line?
 - 3.1.3 Are you are aware of such situations, or can you imagine where they might exist?
 - 3.1.4 Do different parties have different versions of events that happened or of how they experienced it? How did you experience what happened?
- 3.2 How consonant or dissonant are those stories? (in other words, does your group generally believe the stories? Do other stakeholders? What countervailing stories exist?)
- 3.3 How do these stories match with reality? Are they aspirational, optimistic cynical? What story forms and archetypes are present?
- 3.4 How do your stories align with the larger context? Look for alignment and lack of alignment.
- 3.5 Where does your own story fit into the fabric of stories within the organization? Is it a part of the dominant storyline? (i.e., would you receive widespread agreement and support for your narrative? Do those who possess the most power (whether formal or informal) embrace the perspective represented by your story? Are the assumptions that seem to underlie your story widely held?)
- 3.6 If your story is fundamentally different from the dominant organizational storyline, what is your greatest motive: to get others to adopt your story? to become more accepting of the dominant storyline? to seek a different, more supportive setting? or something else?
- 3.7 Boje (p. 35) uses hegemony to describe “how one voice is privileged in the intertextual dialogue in ways that are taken-for-granted or too subtle to be acknowledged.” What is the role of hegemony within your organization? Who is privileged to create meaning for others?

- 3.8 Czarniawska (2004) characterizes authoring as a primary quality of power, describing one act of power as when an individual “concoct[s] narratives for others without including them in a conversation” (p. 142).

2.8.1 Have you witnessed this? Has this happen to you? Have you done it to others?

What is your reaction to these quotes? Is this accurate in your experience? Can you provide an example?

- 3.9 What assumptions underlie your story?

- 3.9.1 From Kegan & Lahey (The Way We Talk . . .) Once aware of them, however, we can begin a mindful relationship to the assumptions. What really is my operating assumption here? What do I think about it?

what are of the costs I may pay for holding it? In what kind of situation?

What are some of the benefits? Do I always benefit, or is it circumstance-specific? How might I learn whether it’s valid?

- 3.10 Employ questions from Freedman & Combs (1996) as appropriate:

Deconstruction: Bringing forth problematic beliefs, practices, feelings, and attitudes

Opening space: Unique outcomes, hypothetical experience questions, different points of view, future oriented questions

Preference

Story development: Process, details, time, context, people, hypothetical event questions

Meaning: Meaning and implications; characteristics and qualities; motivations, hopes, and goals; values and beliefs; knowledge and learnings

Part III: Sensecrafting

- 4.1 If you’ve lost the organizational plot line, how can you recover it?
- 4.2 If you are detecting differing assumptions underlying competing stories, how can you reconcile these differences?
- 4.3 If your story is not consistent with the dominant storyline, how do you recruit others to adopt your perspective?
- 4.4 According to Weick et al. (2005) “power is expressed in acts that shape what people accept, take for granted, and reject (Pfeffer 1981). [Shaping

occurs] through things like control over . . . who talks to whom . . . criteria for plausible stories . . . and histories and retrospect that are singled out” (p. 418). How can you leverage these insights in crafting powerful stories?

- 4.5 What is the undertow? In other words, what might you be unconscious of that could derail you? What shadow forms might be playing author? (e.g., Fear, Delusion?)
- 4.6 Can you write a better story? What is a ‘better’ story? Something more optimistic? Something more generative (i.e., it will lead us to take responsible, constructive action that will increase the likelihood of achieving an outcome we will be satisfied with).
- 4.7 As you think about the stories in your organization, become aware of roles. Who is the author of the story? Are you the author, or is someone else? Are you the character in someone else’s story? If so, have you in some way yielded power?

4.8 Applying the Deliberate Sensemaking Framework:

Learning Intent: Have you seen this before? How is this similar to something you’ve seen before? How is it different? Is a pattern playing out? Is this a generative pattern, or do you wish to push things toward some alternative outcome?

Tolerating Ambiguity: Are two or more forces opposed to one another creating conflicting priorities or commitments? How can these forces be transcended?

Discernment: Have you collected the important information needed to understand this situation? What might be missing? What seems to be most important?

Openness: Have you opened yourself to multiple perspectives? How different are these perspectives from your own? How have these perspectives shaped your thinking?

Framing: What steps have you taken to understand how you are framing the problem? What assumptions, values and biases are influencing how you see the problem? How might you reframe the situation?

Mindfulness: What conclusions have you already drawn? How did you get there -- see if you can retrace your steps? As you do so, notice the points at which you made choices, taking a right where left was also an option. What might be the outcome if you took a different path? What conclusion might you be drawing instead?

Envisioning: What outcome do you envision unfolding? What will be needed to support it? How have you/can you enlist others in the creation of this vision?

Action: What actions have you already taken? To what extent have these actions caused path dependency? What are the best actions that you can take to ensure the outcome that you are envisioning?

Reflection: As you take action, ask yourself how it feels: are you getting closer to the future you envisioned? Why, why not? How might you course correct? Have you overlooked anything (periodically review the questions above)? What are you learning? Based on your learnings, how will you adjust going forward?

Appendix C: The Sensecrafting Cards

1) Frame Experiment

Frame experimentation “refers to a way of bringing a different perspective to the fore and trying it out on a situation to see what we might learn,” (Isaacs, 1999).

Frame experimentation represents a reflective form of thinking in which the individual considers the underlying mental models at play in her understanding of the situation. Frame experimentation, or the testing of hypotheses that relate to one’s underlying model of circumstances, has two components: an awareness of the frames, and the mental dexterity to restructure the frames.

What is a new frame that you could impose upon the situation?

How will you behave or think differently given this new frame?

2) Storycatching

The Storycatcher is one who works deliberately with story to help people make sense of their experience.

The Storycatcher’s job is to help us shift into narrative: to make people conscious of the story just beneath the surface of our talk and invite us to speak it, (Baldwin, 2005).

What stories are you telling yourself about the organization?

What stories are others telling? Do different parties have different versions of events that happened?

How is the purpose story being:

Reinforced?

Shifted?

Changed?

Sustained?

Ignored?

Undermined?

3) Suspension

Suspension involves developing an awareness of our assumptions, and rather than identifying with those assumptions, or seeing through them in a way that makes their effects transparent to us, we hold our assumptions out in front of us.

Suspending reactions is critical as unconscious sensemaking is often triggered by dissonance when the current mental models are unable to seamlessly explained data and fit the data into the expected narrative.

How are your assumptions shaping what you see?

What would you see without your assumptions?

Who would you be without your story?

4) Ladder of Inference

Another technique for surfacing tacit material is the ladder of inference, Argyris (1990). The ladder is an analogy to help individuals understand the meanings, assumptions and beliefs that they hold below the level of their awareness. The ladder is characterized by several rungs of increasing abstraction. This model can help us understand how we move from taking in what might seem to be objective information, to taking action based on our unchallenged beliefs and assumptions.

According to Ross (1994) the ladder can be used in three ways:

- 1) To become aware of your thinking and reasoning
- 2) To make your thinking and reasoning more visible to others.
- 3) To inquire into others' thinking and reasoning.

How can you move up the ladder of inference?

5) Left Hand Column

The Left Hand Column is a tool for facilitating reflection. It helps the individual explore tacit assumptions.

To use the Left Hand Column, pick a frustrating situation. Recall a conversation you've had on the topic (or imagine the conversation you need to have). Draw two columns on a piece of paper. In the right hand column record what was actually said. In the left hand column write down what you were thinking or feeling but not saying. (Ross and Kleiner, 1994).

What has really led me to think and feel this way?

What was your intention? What were you trying to accomplish?

Did you achieve the results you intended?

How might your comments have contributed to the difficulties?

Why didn't you say what was in your left-hand column?

What assumptions are you making about the other person or people?

What were the costs of operating this way? What were the payoffs?

How can you use the left-hand column as a resource to improve communications?

6) Journal Writing

"Writing organizes the mind and the actions that lead from the mind. Over time, the decisions and choices we make in the rush of the moment are informed by the self-knowledge our story gives us. We learn that if we have practiced articulating our story, if we have honored the path to this moment by writing it down, the choices we make are congruent with who we say we are. . . . For in writing we live life twice: once in the experience, and again in recording and reflecting upon our experience," (Baldwin, 2005).

How do your stories align with the larger context?

Where does your own story fit into the fabric of stories within the organization? Is it a part of the dominant storyline?

What in your organization do you not understand? Where might you have lost the plot line?

Who is privileged to create meaning for others?

7) Learning Intention

A learning intention means a willingness to be flexible with one's mental models.

The key point to be understood about the learning intention is that it creates an awareness that one's current mental models are just one out of many possibilities and that a richer understanding of the world can be gleaned if one has the courage to scrutinize and possibly revise one's dominant mental models. To the extent that an individual can hold this intention, she opens to the possibility of moving from unconscious sensemaking (which occurs when confronted with dissonance) toward conscious sensemaking which requires no trigger.

How do your stories align with the larger context?

Where does your own story fit into the fabric of stories within the organization? Is it a part of the dominant storyline?

What in your organization do you not understand? Where might you have lost the plot line?

Who is privileged to create meaning for others?

8) Tolerating Ambiguity

Tolerance for ambiguity means having an accepting attitude toward what appears to be contradictory. The operative word is appears.

So, in dealing with apparent ambiguity, patience is needed. Rather than avoiding ambiguity or becoming paralyzed by apparent contradiction, ambiguity calls out for us to integrate and transcend. By integrating, we embrace all the paradoxical aspects of an ambiguous situation. By transcending, we move beyond that place and develop a frame where what had once appeared ambiguous is now seen as a part of a larger whole, a whole large enough to contain the ambiguous object's paradoxes.

Are two or more forces opposed to one another creating conflicting priorities or commitments?

How can these forces be transcended?

9) Discernment

Discernment relates to how we define our world, how we separate figure from ground. Discernment concerns nuance, the ability to draw subtle distinctions. The ability to discern is based upon experience.

Sensecrafting unfolds when the individual becomes conscious of her discernment and begins to deliberately attend to her sensemaking. According to Weick and Putnam (2006), “Her interventions to reduce mindlessness tend to promote discrimination of subtle cues that had gone unnoticed before. When these cues are noticed, routines that had been unfolding mindlessly are interrupted.”

Have you collected the important information needed to understand this situation? What might be missing?

What seems to be most important?

10) Openness

Openness is characterized by possibility, the unexpected, the new, the different. An open approach connotes receptivity to all the possible ways of approaching a situation.

Weick (1990) refers to one technique of openness as reconnaissance which he defines as “lowering one’s defenses, seeing fully, looking again at things one considers already understood, capturing previously undetected nuances, and developing high-variety languages to describe what is discovered” (p. 313).

Have you opened yourself to multiple perspectives?

How different are these perspectives from your own?

How have these perspectives shaped your thinking?

11) Framing

When we make meaning, we seek to stabilize the situation, to declare what it is that is going on. Once we bring that which is within our frame into focus, we are no longer attending to the process that we use to select the object of our attention. Once brought into focus, the object serves to anchor our awareness, providing the stability that humans crave.

What steps have you taken to understand how you are framing the problem?

What assumptions, values and biases are influencing how you see the problem?

How might you reframe the situation?

12) Mindfulness

Mindfulness is concerned with cultivating an awareness of where we are along the spectrum of Discernment/Openness. Mindfulness is about bringing to consciousness all the framing devices that constitute our capacity to discern. Once brought to awareness, we can make a conscious choice to alter these frames, or mental models. Mindfulness represents the capacity to perceive and change our mental models.

What conclusions have you already drawn?

How did you get there -- see if you can retrace your steps? As you do so, notice the points at which you made choices, taking a right where left was also an option.

What might be the outcome if you took a different path?

What conclusion might you be drawing instead?

13) Envisioning

“It is becoming clearer why so many organizations die young. Recent studies increasingly make the point that managing by existing maps leads to imitation, repetition, and excess,” Stacey (p. 9) asserts. Palus and Horth (2000) explained, “The old rules were about following maps. The new rules are about making the maps-and often the compasses as well,” (Chapter 2, Section 6, para. 1). So while looking forward to chart a course is still vital, the task may be much more difficult than previously experienced. Envisioning is more about entering into uncharted territory with some sense of the ultimate destination, but no map to chart the way.

What outcome do you envision unfolding?

What will be needed to support it?

How have you/can you enlist others in the creation of this vision?

14) Action

“Weick (1995) emphasizes a curious feature about sensemaking: the process is more oriented toward plausibility than accuracy. Delaying action could mean that the action we planned and the environment that we acted in are no longer a match. Weick (1995) thus talks about the benefits of bold action. “Bold action is adaptive because its opposite, deliberation, is futile in a changing world where perceptions, by definition, can never be accurate. They can never be accurate because, by the time people notice and name something, it has become something else and no longer exists,” (Weick, 1995, p. 60). Complicating things even more, the environment changes as the result of our action.

What actions have you already taken?

To what extent have these actions caused path dependency?

What are the best actions that you can take to ensure the outcome that you are envisioning?

15) Reflection

When reflecting, we look back upon our actions, see the new world that has been created by the addition of our action, and reconsider what all of this tells us about our mental models.

As you take action, ask yourself how it feels:

Are you getting closer to the future you envisioned?

Why, why not?

How might you course correct?

Have you overlooked anything (periodically review the questions above)?

What are you learning?

Based on your learnings, how will you adjust going forward?

16) Narrative Analysis

“By articulating these ‘vital clues’ that go beyond the rote facts of events, stories possess the possibility of accessing a truth deeper than the truth contained in ‘just the facts’. By including the perspective of what people experienced—what they believed happened—we enter into the realm of meaning. Here, it does not matter so much what really happened, but the meaning that the participants took from those happenings and how they were shaped and effected by events.

It seems to me that a would-be-leader must either adopt the dominant storyline, or find enough co-travelers who will embrace the nascent leader’s storyline; one of those two conditions must be met for one to be a leader.

What are stories of people who get rewarded or punished?

How would you describe the communication in this organization? Are people able to be open and honest? Why or why not?

What frustrates you at work (with your team/department, etc)?

What successes do you and your team/department have at work?

If you are detecting differing assumptions underlying competing stories, how can you reconcile these differences?

17) Authoring

Writers who engage in narrative analysis conceive power as stemming from the ability to control the story. According to Weick et al. (2005) “power is expressed in acts that shape what people accept, take for granted, and reject (Pfeffer 1981). [Shaping occurs] through things like control over . . . who talks to whom . . . criteria for plausible stories . . . and histories and retrospect that are singled out” (p. 418). For Simmons (2007) the power of authoring derives from its effect on peoples’ mental models: “If you control the feelings and filters of enough people you can alter their conclusions about reality,” (Chapter 1, para. 10).

Can you write a better story?

What is a 'better' story?

Something more optimistic?

Something more generative? (i.e., it will lead us to take responsible, constructive action that will increase the likelihood of achieving an outcome we will be satisfied with).

18) Archetypal Fields

An archetypal field is something unseen that organizes the behavior of humans into pattern. The recognition of patterns is the key to perceiving archetypes; just as we can. The 'see' the wind by its effects on a pond or a tree, we can know the archetype through its presence as pattern.

The "... archetype often consumes individual consciousness and works to incarnate through the types of situations, obsessions, interests, concerns, and moods we experience. The presence and existence of the archetype is felt through its effects," (Conforti, 1999).

What metaphor would you use to describe your organization?

Are you caught in a field? How so?

Are there patterns that keep repeating themselves?

How do they manifest?

What is the story of the field?

How can you break free from this field?

What is the undertow? In other words, what might you be unconscious of that could derail? What shadow forms might be playing author (e.g., Fear, Delusion)?

Appendix D: Overview of Research Plan

	<i>1:1 Session</i>	<i>Homework</i>	<i>Orienting Questions</i>
<i>Part 1: Opening</i>	Introduction		What are you noticing?
	Getting Grounded in the research approaches	Identify the Challenge for exploration	What are you hearing? What are you saying? What are you doing?
<i>Part 2: Exploring & Sensecrafting</i>	Exploring Dissonance		What stories are present in the larger organization?
	Practicing Inquiry		What dissonance exists between individual/smaller group stories and organizational stories?
	Exploring Assumptions		What assumptions underlie the stories?
	Crafting New Stories		How can we create more generative stories?
<i>Part 3: Closing</i>	Reflection		What did we learn?
	Wrap-up		