

THE LEADER'S MUSE:
AN EXPLORATION OF HOW ARTISTIC SENSIBILITIES INFORM
ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Approval of the Dissertation

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigated the emerging concept of leadership as artistry that exists in literature at the intersections of psychology, neuroscience, leadership, organizational development, communication theory, creativity, the expressive arts, education (especially art education), spirituality, and business. This study investigated how artistic sensibilities might enhance one's leadership effectiveness through the subjective experience of attunement and expression. Attunement involves a full experience of one's internal and external environment, and expression is the ability to articulate one's unique perspective. The purpose of this study was to discover and map the uses, value, and application of leadership informed by artistic sensibilities in work situations. Phenomenologically oriented interviews were conducted with organizational leaders who had significant experience with an artistic medium. The findings suggest that the spillover of one's artistic sensibilities into one's leadership approach may enhance aesthetically oriented capacities such as relational awareness, mindful engagement, creative imagination, and inspired states. Based on these results, further inquiry and research are recommended.

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I dedicate this dissertation to the two most creative and beautiful feminine forces that bookend my life: my mother, Ayla, and my daughter, Sema.

Poem

There are two kinds of intelligence: One acquired,
As a child in school memorizes facts and concepts
From books and from what the teacher says,
Collecting information from the traditional sciences
As well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world
You get ranked to your competence in retaining
Information. You stroll with this intelligence
In and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more
Marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one
Already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing in its springbox. A freshness
In the center of the chest. This other intelligence
Does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
And it doesn't move from outside to inside
Through the conduits of plumbing – learned.

This second knowing is a fountainhead
From within you, moving out.

~ Rumi

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious.

It is the source of all true art and science.

~ Albert Einstein

Leadership requires the pragmatic awareness of what is possible within an industry, organization, or unit; yet, leadership involves something more. Leaders need to have the relational, aesthetic, and organizational skills that enable them to sense the changes that abound, develop plans to best respond to those changes, and communicate their perspective in ways that inspire and bring out the individual and collective best in their people. Leadership requires the exercise of artistry.

Although we often think of organizational leaders as those people who hold senior level positions within their enterprises, for our purposes, we will work with a more expanded definition that includes not only these positional leadership roles, but also leadership at every level of the organization. We will define a leader as someone who leads an organization, team, project, or some sort of organizational structure or organizational endeavor.

This dissertation explores the intersection of artistic and aesthetic sensibilities with organizational leadership by seeking insights into the question: *How does one's artistic sensibilities enhance their leadership effectiveness?* It is likely that the findings will challenge common assumptions about leadership and decision-making. In organizations today, as has been true the past hundred years, we value rationality, sobriety, analytics, thoroughness and certainty. The possibility that intuition, playfulness, imagination, fluidity, diffuse awareness, and paradoxical thinking can be beneficial to organizations and organizational leaders is an area worthy of study. Increasingly

leadership literature is demonstrating our need for collective and cooperative approaches to the challenges we face (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010; Block, 2009; Briskin, 1996; Goleman, 2006; Pearce & Conger, 2003; Senge, 2006; Wheatley, 1992). This study is a natural extension of these emerging ideas.

Artistry and the creative force of imagination are elements associated with relating differently to ourselves and the world around us. An application of this kind of leadership involves our ability to see the subtle dynamics and hidden patterns occurring in a situation. This form of leadership involves being open to different perspectives, the ability to see a broader picture, and the capacity to tolerate and even embrace uncertainty and ambiguity. The benefit most associated with these qualities is the developing confidence that answers will emerge if we remain disciplined and alert to discovery.

This study gathered and interpreted individual experiences of leaders to shed light on the artistic aspects of what organizational leaders do on a daily basis. Specifically, we attempted to understand how artistic sensibilities shape and inform the operations of those engaged in leadership activities. We studied leaders who are considered to have well-honed artistic sensibilities to learn how these sensibilities influence the leader's experience of what's going on and their response within their organizational setting. As explained in greater detail in the next chapter, we used a theoretical framework of attunement and expression to learn how these leaders make use of their artistic sensibilities in their organizational role and responsibilities.

This study is a necessary counter-balance to approaches to leadership and leadership development that focus on reductionism and analytic models. Our findings may be able to address a shortcoming in leadership described by Paul Schoemaker

(2008), a professor at Wharton who, together with Rakesh Khurana from Harvard Business School, denounced current approaches to management education by claiming that “business schools have strayed from their lofty aim of educating far-sighted, moral business leaders to producing myopic, career technocrats” (p. 120).

This kind of *imaginative leadership* faces significant challenges in the organizational world. There are several barriers to broadening the acceptance of this approach. Each of these constraints involves reductionistic tendencies stemming from a desire for predictability and tangible measures of progress and productivity, even at the risk of creating false illusions and dangerous unintended consequences. For instance, organizations taking refuge in reducing tasks to procedures even if those procedures do not really capture all the nuances of the business problem. A second example: organizations try to reduce decisions and judgments to procedures by defining metrics (measurable objectives). Metrics are often used as a way to replace the more artistic aspects of leadership. Finally, informational technologies are taking their toll on this approach to leadership by reducing worker responsibilities to simply monitoring and feeding data into systems.

From my candidacy essay, “Leadership as Artistry,” the work of management pioneer Mary Parker Follett came to symbolize key aspects of what might be called imaginative leadership. Most significantly Follett argued for “the preeminence of leadership as an activity that concerns all actors regardless of their place within a hierarchy” (cited in Bathurst & Monin, 2010, p. 1). Bathurst & Monin (2010) of Massey University in New Zealand suggested that Follett’s *aesthetic inquiry* valued a paradoxical approach that shunned the either/or mentality of traditional leadership and instead

promoted integration, reciprocity, and the circularity of relationships. She believed that people have an immediate sensate response to life experiences that lies at the root meaning of the word *aesthesia* and the notion of aesthetics. She bridged the world of aesthetics with the pragmatic realities of the workplace. In doing so she recognized the importance of play, fluidity, imagination, and differences in ways that moved us beyond fixed positions and rigid beliefs. Her work anticipated the current attention to the leadership capacity to deal with complexity and volatility.

Key to the study of this kind of leadership is an understanding of artistry. For our purposes, artistry is an integrated form of consciousness that draws together the mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional realms of personhood. It is about sensitivity and courage that increases our capacity to understand and act as it involves a deep connection between ourselves and the world around us. It requires intimacy, which leads to trusting our own instincts and sensing right action. At its core, the artistic perspective is a state of mind that enables us to *experience* experience, become transformed, and then be or do something to portray that transformation. Among other things, this process requires us to slow down and shift out of our analytic minds long enough to notice more of what is going on in the moment both within us and around us, and to fully engage with this phenomenon. The artistic perspective is a participatory orientation that involves being fully available to co-create with life.

As we prepare to explore this form of new (or forgotten) leadership, it is useful to keep in mind the following framework. The norms and values at play in the business world are consistent with those held by society-at-large and those used to shape how we educate our children. Our propensity for *convergent thinking*—logical, linear thinking that

results in one right answer, one right way—suppresses and hinders *divergent thinking*—a nonlinear perspective that enables us to see things in new ways and make fresh connections (Robinson, 2009). As studies have shown, we essentially *degenuis* our children as they progress through their school years. In an effort to inculcate them into society (and prepare them to perform well on standardized tests) we limit their intelligence to only half their brain (the left half). By the time children complete their education and enter the workforce they are skilled at convergent thinking but highly deficient in divergent thinking (see Appendix A).

Value of This Research

I believe the influence of leadership has important and far-reaching consequences. It directly affects the lives of those who live within the organization where the leadership is practiced and has ripple effects from these people’s experiences that affect their families and their other communities. It also impacts the kinds of products and services organizations produce and thus has further ripple effects in the world where the products and services are used. Finally, because leadership is often something we aspire to when we want to make a difference, our conception of leadership shapes how we prepare ourselves and our children to take up leadership roles.

Leadership matters in relation to how we conduct ourselves for higher purposes. Specifically, leadership is something we want our children to engage in so they can make a positive difference in the future world. Much of our education, whether conscious and intentional or not, is about preparing our children to be tomorrow’s leaders in their families, in their communities, and in their jobs. As already stated, Schoemaker and Khurana (Schoemaker, 2008) described how business schools are preparing students

according to the dominant view of what a successful career entails, usually implied as rising to a leadership position in one's field of choice. However, this educational process starts much earlier than the beginning of graduate school. It begins as early as preschool when we choose between whether we will show our children flash cards to put them on the fast track or whether we will instead encourage their natural instinct for pretend play. How we view leadership, I believe, informs our choices and ultimately whether we honor and connect with nature, imagination, and approaches that encourage attunement and creative expression. We want an educational system that develops our children holistically--to prepare them for figuring out how to live in a world that we could not possibly imagine now. And to do that, we need to develop new ways of understanding what leadership is and does.

When we look at our business organizations and educational systems, we are far too preoccupied with principles such as standardization, conformity, and mass production. These are values left over from the industrial era, which I believe are outdated and limiting. Given the world we live in today and the one expected ahead, new capacities will be required that enable people to navigate in a highly uncertain, immensely complex, and extremely fast-paced world. The ability to deal with novel situations and come up with original solutions will be increasingly necessary for success at all levels of life. This will require us to reevaluate how we develop children as well as business leaders. On the educational front, we need to recognize that art, music, and other arts-oriented subjects are as important as traditional academic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic. On the business front, we need to explore how the artistic perspective might enhance and shape organizational leadership. It is the intention of this

study to begin the dialogue between the leadership needs of the business world and the contributions offered by an aesthetic, creative, artistic perspective.

Approach

This study adopted the approach for a kind of leadership that entails two aesthetically-oriented elements: attunement and expression. Attunement concerns the quality of attention we pay to something and a new relationship we engage in with the object of our attention. Expression entails a deep, playful and creative engagement with the external world that produces an authentic, unifying, and satisfying consummation. Together these two capacities form a new and expanded understanding of what leadership is and does. In my experience as an organizational consultant and executive coach, it feels critical for our organizations to become healthier, more vibrant workplaces that produce both satisfying experiences for employees and sustainable economic results for shareholders and other stakeholders.

To explore this area, we worked with artistic and aesthetic elements to illuminate aspects of leadership that might otherwise remain tacit and unseen. The terms artistic and aesthetic are highly related and often used interchangeably. For this study we defined *artistic* as the ability and willingness to see with new eyes, become transformed, and to skillfully engage from this transformed place. *Aesthetics* has to do with sense-based non-intellectual knowledge. With these terms we captured elusive aspects that, while they are difficult to see and measure, play a crucial and important role in determining a leader's ability to attend to the more subtle dynamics at work in organizations. In this study, *artistic sensibilities* are a byproduct of *aesthetic experiences*. While aesthetic experiences can be gained in many different ways, one of the clearest sources of these experiences

comes in an engagement with art. Whether as an art-maker or art-appreciator, engagement with art tends to elicit a shift to different kind of consciousness that enables us to experience the world and ourselves as part of the world more fully.

Some of the artistic considerations related to leadership this study explored include: storytelling, use of metaphor, a deeper felt sense of one's environment, the use of imagination, mindfulness, and an integration of objective and subjective perceptions. These artistic approaches to leadership heighten our perception of the world and expand the way we look at things, thus offering fresh and innovative perspectives.

Data to refine our understanding of this kind of leadership came from participants who had experience with both well-honed artistic sensibilities and organizational leadership. As Palus and Horth (1996) have observed, "most people, if they exercise their aesthetic competencies, seem to do so through their avocations, interests, and hobbies...personalizing work, allowing artistic interests, or at least the artistic processes that support those interests, to spill over into their job" (p. 62). This study further explored what this spill-over might look like.

Examples of artistic sensibilities may include a dedicated involvement with such things as producing art such as sculpture, film or photography, playing a musical instrument, being a competitive dancer or gymnast, performing in community plays, playing in a band, and so forth.

Some of the areas we may gain insight into include: designing and executing new initiatives, structures, and processes, determining which products to include in a company's portfolio, estimating timelines to build a budget or revise a plan, selecting one contractor over another, picking opportunities that are most promising for one's company

and deserve the most resources, hiring or promoting people, assessing whether a project is progressing well or is derailing, enhancing teamwork, articulating a vision, encouraging employee participation, changing an organization's culture, and so forth.

While seeking to understand how leadership involves the exercise of artistry, this study also sought congruence by using artistic processes of inquiry. As such, this study is written in a tone consistent with arts-based methods such as being transparent about the researcher's lenses and using poetic and metaphoric language. Using principles from Narrative Inquiry, Appreciative Inquiry, and other methods concerned with aesthetic modes of knowing, we collected and analyzed data and presented findings in ways that not only meet academic requirements but also reveal elusive insights and engage readers in visceral ways. Lastly, also in accordance with artistic approaches to inquiry, the researcher had the goal for her engagement in this investigation to be an aesthetic transformative learning experience.

Rationale

Writing this dissertation was part of a quest that began with my interest in understanding the connection between leadership and artistry. I followed a strong suspicion that a connection existed between leadership and artistry that was missing in the business world. Having worked with executives for over 20 years I wondered about the lack of value placed on the more elusive aspects of their work: those things that underlie innovation, inspiration, resilience, collaboration and effective communication. How did those things normally associated with the artist fit in with and support *leadership competencies*? Where did imagination, empathy, soulfulness, beauty, and other right-brain capabilities normally associated with the artist's perspective fit in?

As I honed my inquiry into these questions, I found myself drawing deeply from my spiritual perspective. Seventeen years ago my spiritual quest led me to spend a year in seminary. This was a pivotal year that was key to my career transition from investment banking to the human side of business. Understanding the human side of business, I believed, would be a liberating experience, allowing me to work with elements beyond only that which is measured by formulas on a spreadsheet.

As my quest continued, and fast-forwarding into more recent years, I designed and delivered workshops for corporate executives that focused on the connection between artistry and leadership. I also wove this thinking into my executive coaching engagements. On the personal development front, I focused my graduate work on studying Expressive Arts to gain greater experience with and understanding of how this field could enhance the capabilities of those leading business enterprises. Much of my original thinking and the workshops I designed drew from the ideas of Daniel Pink (2005) about *leadership in the conceptual era*. This thinking resonated for me in describing how we are moving into an era where the marketplace is influenced by more aesthetic considerations (such as beauty, spirituality, and emotion) rather than the conventional focus on more rational criteria (such as cost, utility, etc).

What Pink (2005) described as an age that prized *high touch* and *high concept* came on the heels of recognizing the *cultural creatives* and their new values (Ray & Anderson, 2000). It was especially compelling to see the connection between this new direction and what might be called feminine principles. Given my long-standing desire to see a hyper-masculine workplace become balanced with feminine values, the frameworks above strongly resonated for me. As Ray and Anderson (2000) pointed out, most of the

cultural creatives' values are women's values and a majority of the cultural creatives are women. Perhaps we are moving to an era where we are ready to figure out how to integrate the *values of enterprise* (which tend to be masculine values) with the *values of belonging* (which tend to be feminine values) (Flinders, 2002).

As I further explored my interest in the connection between leadership and artistry, I became intrigued with the idea of artistry and intimacy. The artist engages in intimate encounters with the world around her, especially with her focal subject. She merges with the subject and then is able to recreate it from her own perspective. For example, we can look at the way actors "know" their characters and step into them. This stepping into isn't simply a reproduction. Rather, the actor brings into it his or her own style and interpretation. Two actors will step into the same character in different ways. Also, we hear of how actors tend to fall in love with other actors they make a movie with. Perhaps this is because they are so open, so fully engaged with the other, so fully intimate with the other. Painters, musicians, writers and other artists also engage with their art in the same way. Whatever they are creating is their rendition of something they have had an intimate encounter with. It was my interest in studying this intimate encounter that led me to focusing on the intersection between artistic sensibilities and leadership.

The 22-year journey in my business career, working in diverse fields that spanned across a wide spectrum of perspectives, has led me to my current thinking. I've come to view the world from a *participatory orientation*, a way of knowing and relating to the world in which knower and known are distinct but not separate and exist within an unfolding unitive field (Reason, 1993). I believe this perspective might have much of value to offer the business world. Given my opportunities to get an inside look at the

world of investment banking and finance (the hard, numbers oriented approach to business), and the organizational consulting world (the softer, people oriented approach to business), I believe I have a unique perspective on participatory consciousness framed by my studies in wisdom traditions, creative expression, and conscious business. My commitment to this path is what led me to this dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

During the past decade the concept of leadership as artistry has generated increased interest among the scholarly and practitioner communities. This chapter will explore the theoretical basis for leadership as artistry and develop a conceptual framework for its further investigation as per this proposal. For purposes of keeping our conceptual framework separate from various other terms used to describe leadership as artistry, we will temporarily name our conceptual/theoretical framework *imaginative leadership*. This name will only act as a temporary placeholder until our investigation is completed and, very possibly, another term that more accurately captures the finding will be used instead.

Imaginative leadership as defined in this study has three distinct features and thus warrants three distinct literature reviews. These features include (1) *attunement*, (2) *expression*, and (3) *the marriage of leadership and artistry*. After a brief overview of imaginative leadership, we will embark upon a deep exploration of attunement and its elements of *empathy, perception, and presencing*. Then, after a short discussion about different types of knowing, we will engage in another deep exploration, this time of expression and its elements of *voice* and *playful engagement*. The final part of our literature review will involve a close look at existing work on the marriage of leadership and artistry. For this last section we will begin with a brief historical overview of the connection between leadership and artistry. Next we will look at three distinct but related aspects of leadership as artistry: *organizational aesthetics*, *aesthetic leadership* and *arts-based leadership development*.

The term imaginative leadership is sparsely used in the literature, yielding only two results on Amazon.com (both of which reference the same book and the elusive work of Harry Galpin Stoddard in 1952) and 1050 results on Google Scholar (none of which address imaginative leadership as a concept). By contrast however, if we situate what we're calling imaginative leadership within the concept of *creative leadership*, the results are quite different. Resulting in 441 matches on Amazon, 312,000 on Google, and 11,500 on Google Scholar, the term creative leadership is quite prolific in the literature on organizational leadership. For purposes of this inquiry, we will consider imaginative leadership as falling under the broader category of creative leadership.

In addition to a specific subcategory of creative leadership called *creative leadership* (De Ciantis 1996; Palus & Horth 1996, 2002; Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2007), there is a plethora of other types of leadership that overlap with imaginative leadership. These include: *aesthetic leadership* (de Monthoux, Gustafsson, & Sjostrand, 2007; Hansen, Ropo, & Sauer, 2007; Howard, 1996), *artful/artistic leadership* (Adler, 2007, 2010; Austen, 2010; Austin & Devin, 2003, 2010; Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Bathurst, Jackson, & Statler, 2010; Biehl-Missal, 2010; Cowan, 2007; Darso, 2004/2009; Deal & Peterson, 1994; De Ciantis, 1995, 1996; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006; DePree, 1989, 1992; Dobson, 1999; Hatch, Kostera & Kozminski, 2005; Howard, 1996; Jones, 2006, 2010, 2011; Klein & Diket, 1999; Ladkin, 2008; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Merritt, 2010; Mitra, Hsieh, & Buswick, 2010; Nissley, 2010; Palus & North, 1996, 2002; Reaves & Green, 2010; Richards, 1995; Ropo, Parviainen, & Koivenen, 2002; Sauer & Ropo, 2007; Scharmer & Kaeufer, 2010; Siler, 2010; R. A., 1996; Springborg, 2010; Thomson, 2010; Wicks & Rippin, 2010; Woodward & Funk, 2004, 2010), *mindful leadership*

(Dickman & Stanford-Blair, 2009; Langer, E., 2010), *connective leadership* (Lipman-Blumen, 1996), *poetic leadership* (Kasten-Daryanani, 2007), *the circle way* (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010), *intuitive leadership* (Strozzi, 2004), *servant leadership* (Autry, 2001; Frick & Speaks, 1996; Spears, 1995 & 1998), *integrative leadership* (Winston & Patterson, 2005), *integral leadership* (Pauchant, 2005; Prewitt, 2004; Warneka & Warnecka, 2007), *inter-leadership* (Küpers & Weibler, 2008), *transformational leadership* (Ackoff, 1999; Burns, 2003), *appreciative leadership* (Whitney, 2010), *dialogic leadership* (Isaacs, 1999), *resonant leadership* (Boyatzis, R. & McKee, 2005), *love leadership* (Bryant, 2009), *leading with kindness* (Baker & O’Malley, 2008), *liquid leadership* (Davis, A. M., 1997), *constructivist leadership* (Lambert et al., 2002), *clear leadership* (Bushe, 2010) and *authentic leadership* (Gardner, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2005; George, 2007). Danah Zohar’s (1997) *quantum thinking* as applied to leadership also has much congruence with imaginative leadership. Parker Palmer’s (2007) view of *ecological leadership* is also quite aligned with many principles of imaginative leadership. As Palmer suggested, “we are all called to lead wherever we are planted: in the family, the workplace, the community” (p. xxv).

Of the many approaches cited above the ones most closely aligned with imaginative leadership are artful and aesthetic leadership, appreciative leadership, and constructive leadership. The former will be discussed more extensively in a section below about the marriage of artistry and leadership. In this section, it behooves us to describe with greater detail how imaginative leadership builds on the latter two approaches.

In many ways, appreciative leadership and constructivist leadership are both cut from the same cloth as both share their underpinnings in the social construction of reality

(Lambert et al., 2002; Whitney, 2010). Both define organizations in a similar vein, as “centers of human relatedness alive with infinite constructive capacity” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 3); where organizations’ and individuals’ construction of themselves and their realities (their beliefs, identify, values, etc) occurs in a communal and relational way (Gergen, 1994, 1999).

Constructivist leadership is based upon the same humane and participatory principles as the work of Mary Parker Follett (1924) and James Burns (2003): that of a community of leaders. In these communities, the primary notion of effectiveness has to do with the organization/community’s ability to generate collective meaning that leads to shared purpose that in turn leads to collective action. In a sense, this perspective is very similar to Peter Senge’s (1990) description of *learning organizations* as places where generative learning continuously occurs. The role of the leader in these learning organizations is that of a steward who can foster the process of learning from new experiences. Senge’s inclusion here is not surprising since he too was influenced by the same underpinnings as the proponents of constructivist leadership. At the heart of this approach to both learning and leading is dialogic conversation, a form of conversation that Schön (1987) described as verbal improvisation and what Michael Jones (2006) described as our new art form. Senge (2006) made an important contribution to framing our topic because he, in the same vein as Follett, emphasized the organic model of an organization as “a human community, a group of people who are doing something together that has some meaning to them” (p.1).

We might think of this creative, relational approach to leadership we are calling imaginative leadership as part of a wider movement that we are collectively engaged in.

For instance, Dan Siegel, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, who developed the concept of *interpersonal neurobiology* (IPNB) has been applying this perspective to leadership. In a recent article Siegel co-authored with Debra Pearce-McCall (2009), they call for new approaches to leadership, approaches that are desperately needed in today's era where the stakes are especially high (Bennis, 2007).

In the leadership field, past theories focused on charisma, authority, personal style, and other individual variables, attempting to understand how leaders exerted top-down influence on groups, but newer views of leadership consider the relationship between leader and follower as a mutual emergent process (Siegel & Pearce-McCall, 2009).

It is my hope that this study will contribute to a body of knowledge about these newer views of leadership.

Review of Literature in Attunement

Attunement is a term originally derived from the musical field, meaning “to bring into harmony”(Online Etymology Dictionary). The Random House Dictionary (1997) definition of *attune* is “to bring into accord, harmony or sympathetic relationship; adjust.” For our purposes, and the way we will use the term here, attunement is both the quality of attention we’re paying to something and a new relationship we engage in with the object of our attention. In some ways, this term is similar to *resonance*, which is also derived from the musical realm. Like resonance, which means to *re-sound*, attunement refers to a flow of vibration between two things (Levi, 2003). Both words convey a sense of two things being in-synch with each other. However, for purposes of this study, I have chosen to use the term attunement instead of resonance because attunement carries a more

proactive feeling. Resonance emerges, whereas attunement requires action on our part.

For purposes of this literature review, attunement is about connecting and experiencing. It is a form of nonverbal communication that involves receiving, listening, and noticing. Given the meager amount of literature on attunement as it is described here, it is necessary to take a multidisciplinary approach to this part of the literature review. There are three angles from which we can explore approaches to attunement that have significance for imaginative leadership. We might think of these angles as three types of attunement: empathy, perceptiveness, and presencing.

Empathy as a form of attunement. Empathy entails opening ourselves to others. It conveys a sense of relatedness, connectivity, caring, and compassion. It is the ability to imagine the inner life of another. In this way, empathy dissolves our sense of separateness, making us more permeable and porous, and expands our ability to see different perspectives.

While empathy is a capacity that emerged in mammals during the evolutionary transition from reptiles to mammals (Carter, Harris, & Porges, 2009), empathy as a social/cognitive/psychological capacity is a relatively recent construct (Ickes, 2003). We might describe empathy as attunement to the emotional states of others (Cozolino, 2006). This involves resonating with others' unconscious affect and experiencing their experience with them (Decety, 2007). This type of attunement often leads to a caring response to the other. The prosocial behavior that emerges from a genuine empathic experience is considered by many to be at the core of moral development and healthy social cohesion (Hoffman, 2000; Planalp, 1999).

Another way to understand this caring concept of empathy is to explore its opposite: apathy or lack of caring. Apathy happens when our hearts are hardened and closed. And this hardening or closing often happens when we first shut down to those parts of ourselves that we don't like, what's known in Jungian psychology as our shadow selves (Zweig & Wolf, 1997). Lack of empathy can also occur due to autism where individuals lack capacities to perceive emotions (Harmon-Jones & Winkielman, 2007). Baron-Cohen (2002), one of the foremost specialists in autism research, referred to this disorder as the extreme male brain, leading to the generally but not unanimously accepted belief about gender difference in empathic capacities (also Baron-Cohen, Kinkmeyer, & Belmonte, 2005). Other neuroscientists describe how lack of empathy enables people to objectify others and use others for their own needs (Cozolino, 2006).

It is encouraging to think about how we might be hard-wired for empathy. Given neuroscience's relatively recent discovery of mirror neurons in the brain, we now know that within a split second of being in someone's presence our preconscious minds can read and get in sync with what the other person is feeling (Braten, 2007; Goleman, 2006; Harmon-Jones & Winkielman, 2007; Jeffers, 2009a, 2009b; Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2008; Szalavitz & Perry, 2010). Our mirror neurons operate instantaneously and produce raw social knowledge by decoding social signals (Goleman, 2006) that are directly gained and that may or may not ever become conscious to us (Buck & Ginsburg, 1997). This phenomenon related to the neural underpinnings of empathy is explained by Jean Decety (2007), a social neuroscientist and psychology professor at the University of Chicago, as "a simulation of the subjectivity of the other" (p. 263). This same phenomenon may also be thought of as our *resonance circuitry*, a term used by Dan

Siegel (2010), a well-known author, researcher, and psychiatrist. We have the biological ability to form pre-conceptual, pre-linguistic social bonds with one another. Thanks to this ability for bonding, we are able to share experiences and thus form the social cohesion needed to operate as partners, teams, groups, and societally. As both Siegal (2010) and Gerald Hüther (2006), a German neurobiologist, describe, our brain is much more of a social organ than a thinking organ. The implications of this for leadership are quite significant, giving greater credence to the subtler and tacit dynamics and processes that underlie our more explicit and mental understandings.

Empathy is a highly studied topic as illustrated by the 295,000 results produced on Google Scholar. There are many theories on empathy ranging across the fields of psychology, sociology, and neuroscience. One highly notable theorist on this topic is Carl Rogers, a preeminent American psychologist and co-founder of the field of humanistic psychology. Well-known for introducing the concept of a person-centered way of being into the psychological literature, Rogers (1980) emphasized empathy as one of the key cornerstones of this way of being. Approaching empathy as a process rather than as a state, he defined empathy as “entering, and becoming at home in, the private perceptual world of the other” (p. 142). This is an active process involving a certain sensitivity that allows one to tune in, moment by moment, to the continual shifts in the felt meanings of the other. When someone is empathetic with us in this way, we feel understood and connected.

In 1977 Thomas Gordon coined the term *active listening* and brought C. Rogers' concepts into mainstream thinking, especially in the business world. In his book, *Leader Effectiveness Training*, Gordon described active listening as listening for the emotion

behind the words. As cited by Marshall Rosenberg (2003) in his approach to *non-violent communication*, this empathetic, deep way of listening enables the other to feel heard thereby diffusing hostility and fostering collaboration and compassion. As he states in a recent blog entry “empathy calls upon us to empty our mind and listen to others with our whole being” (Rosenberg, 2010, blog post).

Many others have followed and continued to build upon the infusion of empathy into the organizational world through the idea of active listening. Two such revolutionaries in this field include Daniel Goleman and Daniel Pink.

In 1995 Daniel Goleman, a prolific author, psychologist and science journalist, wrote a groundbreaking book titled *Emotional Intelligence* that expanded the understanding of intelligence to include more than just IQ. Following up with a second bestselling book ten years later on *Social Intelligence* (2006), he sealed in the new thinking that redefines what it means to be smart. According to Goleman (2006), empathy plays a central role in both emotional and social intelligence. Given that we are wired to connect, it is understandable that empathic capacities comprise over 75% of components related to the social awareness aspects of social intelligence.

While in this study, we are defining empathy as an aspect of attunement, it is interesting to note that Goleman (2006) distinguished empathy from attunement. Actually, he made distinctions between primal empathy, empathic accuracy, and attunement: primal empathy is automatic and momentary whereas attunement entails a more sustained presence. In this definition, attunement is an intentional and deliberate way of paying attention, of deeply listening. On the other hand, empathic accuracy is about the ability to infer another’s unspoken thoughts and feelings. William Ickes (1993,

2003) pioneered this measure of empathic inference and involves spontaneous communication in nonverbal forms such as facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, pheromones, and so forth.

Daniel Pink (2005), an author who has perhaps done the most for generating serious interest in right brain intelligence amongst those in the business world, included empathy as one of the six capacities that will enable professional success and personal fulfillment in today's world. Describing empathy as an act of instinct rather than of deliberation, and as a "stunning act of imaginative derring-do, the ultimate virtual reality – climbing into another's mind to experience the world from that person's perspective" (p. 153), he considers this act of attuning oneself to another as a valuable aptitude that cannot be replicated by computers or codified and outsourced to others. One's ability to empathize better enables one to truly understand what the other needs, by tuning into the subtext beneath the explicit words.

Given the importance of empathy in effective communication, it is not surprising that many relational approaches to leadership also recognize the essential quality of this ingredient. This is especially apparent if we hold the objective of leadership as "the stirring of human consciousness, the interpretation and enhancement of meanings, the articulation of key cultural strands, and the linking of organizational members to them" (Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986, p. 8). Implied in this statement are the concept of community and the importance of shared values and shared meanings, for which empathy is a key underpinning. Empathy as a form of social intelligence (Goleman, 2006) enables leaders to be more effective in their endeavors involving social artistry (Houston, 1993; Jones, 2006). If, as Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) suggested in their book,

Primal Leadership, great leadership works through the emotions by “driving collective emotions in a positive direction and clearing the smog created by toxic emotions” (p. 5), then a leader’s empathic capacity becomes quite crucial. When leaders fail to empathize with a group, when they fail to truly understand what the group is feeling, they are likely to create dissonance and collective distress. Rather, when leaders are empathetic, it is more likely they will build resonant relationships with those around them and inspire their organizations to reach for the “seemingly impossible” (Boyzatis & McKee, 2005). Similar to Goleman et al.’s primal leadership, *resonant leadership* explicitly cites compassion, defined as “empathy in action” (Boyzatis & McKee, 2005, p. 178) as one of three essential features of leadership effectiveness. Building a culture of compassion serves to foster shared understanding and instill employees with a sense of belonging.

Empathy and compassion are also embraced by other leadership *thought leaders*. We see this with several leadership experts who espouse the merits of love, caring, and connectedness as capacities and ways of being that enhance leadership. For instance, Lance Secretan (2006) talked about love, service, and oneness as fundamental concepts underlying *conscious leadership*. Likewise, John Hope Bryant (2009) formulated an alternative to conventional (and antiquated) leadership styles, which he described as fear-based, in developing a relational approach he calls *love leadership*. Furthermore, research conducted by academic practitioners William Baker and Michael O’Malley (2008) placed kindness, of which compassion and empathy are key ingredients, on the map as a key leadership competency. In making their case, these researchers explain how personal connection, instead of charisma, is what creates the emotional resonance necessary to move people toward collective excellence. These perspectives are also shared by the

concept of servant leadership. As James Autry (2001), a former CEO of a large publishing company and author of numerous books and articles on servant leadership, described, empathy is an aspect of vulnerability. When we are open to seeing things from others' viewpoint, we are relinquishing control and becoming open to a different reality.

Another early inference of empathy as related to leadership effectiveness was made twenty years ago in Sally Helgesen's (1990) exploration of women's ways of leadership. According to Helgesen, women's advantageous approaches to leadership involve creating *webs of inclusion* where communication, relationships, and connection are valued. Empathic ways of being serve to foster the qualities needed in forming these circular organizational structures.

Likewise, John Kotter (1999), a professor of leadership at Harvard Business School and a highly recognized authority on leadership, wrote about the importance of relationships and communication in leadership effectiveness. In describing "how leading is a growing part of managerial work," he notes how "leaders operate through a complex web of dependent relationships" (p. 6). These informal networks tend to be as, if not more, powerful than the formal hierarchical structures in guiding how things actually get done. By extension, power over others gets replaced by dependence on others. In such environments, leaders who are successful find themselves operating in more ambiguous, rather than systematic ways. According to Kotter's research (ch. 7), the best leaders spend a large majority of their time interacting with others: asking questions, building networks of cooperative relationships, and developing agendas. Engaging in each of these activities requires high levels of communication finesse for which empathy is a foundational capacity.

Furthermore, empathy is an important construct for leadership theories recognizing that reality is socially constructed. For instance, constructivist leadership (Lambert et al., 2002) departs from the concept of “one leader” and rather provides a relational view of leadership as a shared act “embedded within the patterns of learning relationships” (p. 61). Leadership is seen as “an inclusive field of processes in which leaders do their work.” (p. 57). Originating as a leadership approach for educational organizations, constructivist leadership has equal relevance for all organizations. This democratic approach defines leadership as “the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose about schooling” (p. 36). What Linda Lambert (in Lambert et al., 2002) said about constructivist leadership can apply to most of today’s organizations: “Constructivist leadership addresses the need for sense-making, for coherence, and for seeing educational communities as growth-producing entities” (p. 35).

Likewise, leadership theories based on appreciative inquiry (Whitney, 2010) value communicative practices and their ability to produce shared understandings and views of reality. Like constructivist leadership, appreciative leadership also takes a dialogic approach to leadership rooted in the concept of the organization as a living process in which every conversation in every location could affect the future of the organization (Gergen, 2009). In such an ecosystem, our ability to empathize significantly accelerates the synchronization of values and visions to produce and mobilize us toward a shared purpose.

While there is ample research and literature pointing to the benefits and need for empathy, there is less understanding about how to build this capacity. Many researchers

and psychologists concur that early childhood experiences shape our capacities for empathy (Cozolino, 2006; Decety & Ikes, 2009; Kabat-Zinn & Kabat-Zinn, 1997; Porter, 2003; Siegel, 1999; Siegel & Hartzwell, 2003). The neuroscientific literature provides encouraging evidence that we have the hardwiring to support this ability. Yet, many people seem unable to demonstrate empathic capacities. As the social neuroscientist Jean Decety (2007) contended, “People are fundamentally egocentric and have difficulty getting beyond their own perspective when anticipating what others are thinking or feeling...usually people are unaware of this projective tendency” (p. 258). So, if we are not fortunate enough to have received the right parenting to promote our empathic capacities, how else might we develop this key underpinning of emotional and social intelligence?

Some, like C. Rogers (1980), believe that empathy is best learned from empathic persons. Others, like Rosenberg (2010), believe that we need empathy to give empathy. Both of these perspectives are like “chicken and the egg” views that do not clarify the generative sources of empathy. Then others, like Maxine Greene (1995), claim that imagination is a prerequisite to empathy: That until we have well honed imaginative capacities we cannot truly imagine another’s experience.

This last point underscores what might be most relevant to imaginative leadership: that empathy is related to images. For instance, Jean Decety (2007), the social neuroscientist cited above as describing the difficulties of being empathic, mentioned that empathy “might be initiated by a variety of situations – for instance, by seeing another person in distress, by imagining someone else’s behavior, by reading a narrative in a fiction book, or by seeing a moving TV report” (p. 258). All of these examples involve

images, whether actual or in the mind's eye. Following on this perspective, others suggest that expressive arts might be a road to honing our emotional and social intelligence, including our empathic capacities (Siegel, 2007, 2008). Because art-making tends to lift our blindness to our multiplicity – it helps us know and own all the aspects of ourselves, both the pleasant and distasteful. In this process, our empathy for both ourselves and others grows (Allen, 1995). We become free to operate from a place of love and inclusion versus fear and prejudice.

Perception and seeing as a form of attunement.

The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in seeing with new eyes.

~ Marcel Proust, French Novelist

An expanded state of perception is an important aspect of imaginative leadership that allows us to see a larger field of possibilities. It is the ability to see the extraordinary in or amidst the ordinary or expected. It requires patient eyes and a sensitive heart normally associated with artistry.

For example, there is a test used to study *selective attention*, also known as *inattentional blindness*. This test, developed by a Nobel Award recipient, Daniel Simons, shows how we often fail to notice unusual and conspicuous events in our visual environment when our attention is engaged on other matters and the events are unexpected. We tend to filter out things we don't expect (Simons & Chabris, 2009).

Seeing as a form of attunement pertinent to imaginative leadership is further reinforced by the findings of a study Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Robinson conducted for the Getty Center entitled *The Art of Seeing: An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter* (2003). Two things make this study especially interesting and

relevant to imaginative leadership. First, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) is best known for introducing the notion of flow—the capacity for full engagement in an activity. As a researcher and proponent of positive psychology, happiness, and creativity, he has also adapted his work to the arena of leadership (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Second, the findings of the Getty study cited above show that paying deep attention to what we see not only enables us to see more of what's there, but also results in “feelings of personal wholeness, a sense of discovery and a sense of human connectedness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003, p.1). There is increasing evidence that there is a positive correlation between the existence of these feelings and employee engagement in organizations (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rath & Harter, 2010; Whitney, 2010). And increasingly, employee engagement is becoming a greater priority for leaders (Cameron, 2008; Rath & Conchie, 2008; Whitney, 2010).

To better understand this concept, there are three areas worth looking at regarding the literature on perception and seeing. The first concerns different ways of seeing (for which we'll examine a model I developed in one of my candidacy essay); the second has to do with curiosity/wonder as a mindset that might enhance perception; and the third is about presencing and sensing the future as it emerges.

Levels of “seeing.”

We are led to believe a lie
 When we see with and not through the eye.
 ~ William Blake (1803)

In one of my candidacy essays, I developed a model delineating between different types of seeing:

Looking – when our eyes see something but we're not conscious of it.

Noticing – when our mind become aware that our eyes see something.

Observing – when we look closely and notice more than our initial noticing.

Knowing – when our mind pays enough attention to what we see that an intellectual level of meaning is generated.

Embodied Experiencing – when our mind pays attention to what our eyes see and the sense that our body and heart make of what we're seeing (might happen at a precognitive level); a different, deeper, more complete way of knowing.

Imagination – when a vision develops in our mind's eye as a result of our embodied experiencing of it. This is also connected to *insight* and *inspiration*.

Level 1: Looking. How often do we find ourselves looking directly at something and not seeing it? This tends to be the case especially when we're in a rush or our mind is preoccupied with something else. When all our attention is focused on what is on our mind, we are likely to miss even the most obvious and extraordinary experiences that are occurring around us. This is well-documented in some fascinating studies, like the one I mentioned above about inattentional blindness (Simon & Chabris, 1999). For example, in one study, participants are shown a video with instructions to pay attention to a dynamic event (such as kids tossing around a ball). During the viewing, when something unexpected happens in the midst of the activity the participants are paying attention to, the viewers tend not to see it. In one example the unexpected thing was a large gorilla that enters the screen, stops and jumps around yet is undetected by the viewers.

Level 2: Noticing. The second level of seeing, noticing, occurs when we become aware of what we see. At this level we recognize the occurrence or object that is the source of our visual sense and are able to name it. Oftentimes, our seeing becomes aborted at this point. Once we attach a label to something we tend to stop paying

attention to it. This is illustrated by Betty Edwards (1986) in describing two different modes of logic that influence how we think about and therefore see something.

The image below shows two drawings portraying a chrysanthemum. The drawing on the right demonstrates ordinary noticing that becomes aborted once we name it. This naming process involves a search for general characteristics that can be used repeatedly. For instance, a quick look at the chrysanthemum flower itself might identify petals, leaves and a stem. Conventional seeing will look for the general shape of the typical petal and then, without further thinking, draw it again and again; repeating this process for the leaves.

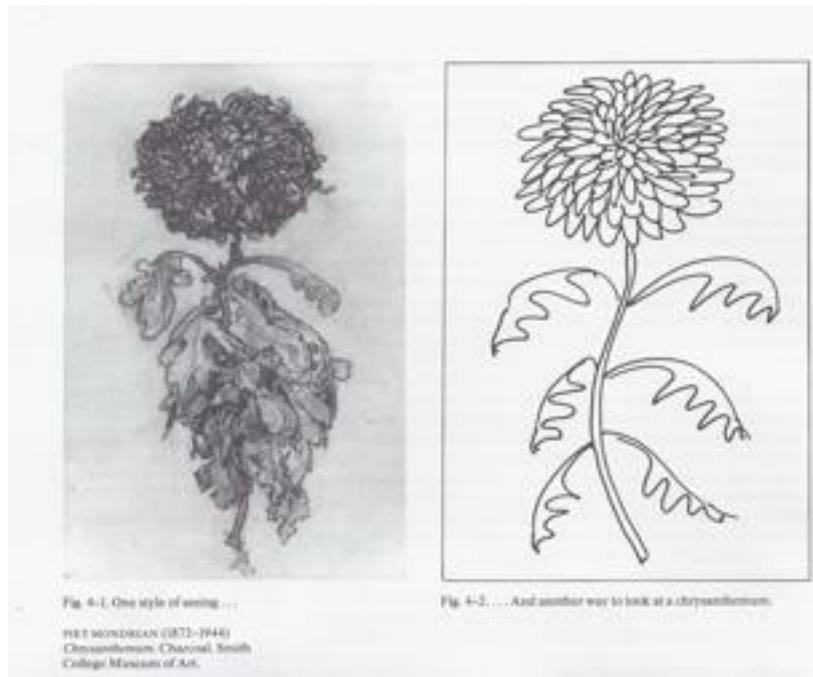


Figure 1. Drawings: Chrysanthemum flower

Level 3: Observing. In contrast with noticing, observing renders more detail and greater complexity. This third level of seeing is a skill used by Modrian in the drawing on the left. As this drawing makes apparent, Mondrian is seeing exact instead of generalized forms and therefore rendering more about the uniqueness and complexity of his subject.

He not only sees how each petal is unique but also the relationship each has to the other petals, to the stem, to the leaves, to the space around the whole and “simultaneously to see all of that in relation to the shape of the drawing paper, the lightness or darkness of each line, the crispness or fuzziness of each mark and so on” (Edwards, 1986, p. 44). Artists have a highly developed *observational prowess* that enables them to notice that which is invisible to the ordinary view (Root-Bernstein, 1999). This is exemplified by Leonardo da Vinci and his detailed and extensive notebooks, in the ways he taught himself to see things in unfiltered way, as if for the first time (Gelb, 1998; Suh, 2005). De Vinci’s journals depict how he viewed objects with immense concentration, from various angles, until they took on a life of their own.

This capacity is one that has merit for the workplace as demonstrated by the nine-year collaborative experience of University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and Cincinnati Art Museum (Mitra et al., 2010). This was a program designed to enhance the *intentional observation* skills of medical students by having them view artworks at the museum. As a result of honing their observation skills, the program resulted in both improved diagnostic abilities and bedside manners among the medical students.

The American sculptor Richard Serra’s (2008) comment eloquently speaks to the connection between seeing and thinking:

I believe that perception structures thought and that to see is to think and conversely to think is to see...no one perceives anything alike; we only perceive as we are and it is our individual reality that counts. (online)

Level 4: Knowing. The fourth level of seeing, knowing, is where we generate mental meaning from what we notice and observe. While sometimes it can stop with the attachment of a general label (as with noticing), the way we are describing it here implies

going one step further to attach value and meaning. This type of sense-making runs what we visually see (or auditorily hear) through our conceptual structures to create understanding. This is what we sometimes call interpretation, though in this case we are intentionally suspending our interpretation until we have seen what we're viewing more deeply. A look at Karl Weick's (2007) work in distinguishing between decision-making and sense-making provides further understanding about this level of seeing. As we shift from perceptually-based knowing to categorically-based knowing we impose abstractions upon our understanding thus creating concepts which are simpler, reduced, and more general. The cost of doing this is distance from the phenomena picked up by direct perception. This distancing happens both in sense-making and in decision-making, but less so in sense-making.

The next two levels, embodied experiencing and imagining, comprise what we'll describe as deeper seeing. It is at these more artistic levels that new conceptual structures can be created.

Level 5: Embodied experiencing. Embodied experiencing entails perceiving the interiority of the world by using our entire self as an instrument for making sense of what we see. At this level we engage in direct and mindful knowing as opposed to knowing that is filtered through our conceptual structures and ego stories (Rosch, 2004). This is the ability to see wholeness, which entails integrating knowledge and character (Steiner, 2003). It is at this level of experiencing and knowing that we begin to see and sense into the inner form of what we are encountering; where new layers of meaning begin revealing themselves in what we see (Berger, 1980). Henri Matisse described this level of seeing when he told his students that the inner feeling they had when looking at

something was more important than what they literally saw with their eyes (Finn, 2000).

In this sense, seeing and being work together to reveal more of the essence of things.

Given this collaboration between seeing and being, our inner development becomes critical as we are unable to see more than we are (Richards, 1980).

Level 6: Imagination. The sixth and highest level of seeing is imagination.

Imagination entails opening our hearts and minds to seeing more than the literal image and to be inspired by the vision that takes place in our minds (Finn, 2000). When we imagine, we think in pictures by seeing with the mind's eye and hearing with the mind's ear. We see what is not directly observable to our physical eyes and generate images of possibilities in our mind. We enter into a state that might be described as diffuse awareness, a meeting point of inner and outer, where we can perceive the wholeness that we are a part of (Allison, 2003). This type of perception is sometimes contrasted with focused concentration and is attributed to women and young children (de Castillejo, 1973; Frenier, 1997). Similarly, Ehrenzrieg (1967) referred to a state of undifferentiated perception as a holistic and non-hierarchical form of perception usually available to children under age eight and artists. Aesthetic experiences are thought to enrich imagination, enabling us to envision not only what is absent but also in stretching our ability to see other points of view and being more flexible and accommodating in our disposition. (as cited in Smith, R. A., 1996, p. 47)

Thus, the expansiveness associated with this enhanced level of perception enables us to envision something new that only we are uniquely able to see.

Writing about artistry, Charles Nicolle, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist and writer, describes the importance of imagination in saying

the disclosure of a new fact, the leap forward, the conquest over yesterday's ignorance, is an act not of reason but of imagination, of intuition. It is an act closely related to that of the artist and of the poet; a dream that becomes reality; a dream which seems to create. (Root-Bernstein, p. 11)

We end this section with one of my favorite quotes from the man who provided the scientific understanding for the relational basis of reality.

I am enough of an artist to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.

~ Albert Einstein

A sense of curiosity. A sense of curiosity is relevant to imaginative leadership because it expands our perception by opening us up and fostering our receptivity (Berlyne, 1954; Shaw 2006). This state of mind is akin to having a sense of wonder and awe, all entailing a certain capacity for humility and reverence (Schneider, 2004) that enables us to see and marvel at extraordinary things that might otherwise appear ordinary. This artistic mindset, which is interestingly also shared by children, takes us to new heights of experience and engagement (Dewey, 1934; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

Curiosity is a way of paying attention to something with the intent to learn more about it. When we're truly curious (rather than exhibiting mechanical curiosity) we tend to ask richer questions. We tend to hold a question longer rather than quickly searching for an answer. Curiosity enables us to adopt a beginner's mind where we are open to learning as children are, as if for the first time. As the Zen Master, Shunryu Suzuki (2006) said: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few" (p. 2).

Perhaps most importantly, curiosity enables us to be fallible and reduces our fear of making mistakes and failing. In being curious we are interested and inquisitive, searching and exploring for the sake of discovering what we don't yet know.

We might also infer that caring is closely associated with curiosity, perhaps even a prelude to curiosity. We tend to be interested in learning about those things or people

that matter to us. When we care about something or someone, we want to know more about it or them. When we care, we want to understand more; the opposite is also true as when we say “I don’t care” it indicates that the conversation is over, we have no interest in learning more.

Presencing/Sensing social fields and the emerging future as a form of attunement. There are other ways to approach ways of widening our sense of perception. In this section we will explore the senses as a portal for knowing and how they might relate to one’s ability to perceive the future as it emerges. If we begin with the premise that organizations are continuously *unfolding verbs* rather than things (de Monthoux et al, 2007; Wieck, 2007), then the ability to see change and movement as it happens becomes a critical leadership capacity.

One way to understand this concept is through the idea of *presencing*. A premise underlying presencing is that our conditioning may restrict our ability to fully interact with the world (Scharmer, 2001, 2007; Scharmer & Kaefer, 2010). If the organizations we are a part of are constantly changing and unfolding in new, often unprecedented ways, then our habitual ways of perceiving cannot effectively serve us. Rather, it becomes necessary to perceive in unhabitual ways, where we break through the barriers of our conditioning and allow ourselves to engage more freely.

Presencing is a term introduced to the field of organizational learning by Otto Scharmer (2001), a senior lecturer at MIT’s Sloan School of Management and founder of The Presencing Institute. According to Scharmer, presencing is the quality of attention we pay to something, and to the source from which we operate. Specifically, we work with the inner place from which we attend to the world around us (Scharmer, 2007). The

type of listening that results from the practice of presencing is what Scharmer calls “generative listening” or “listening from the field of future possibility”(pp. 12-13). As Scharmer suggested, when truly present we enter an altered state and experience a sense of communion with our surroundings.

Presencing is also aligned with what the reknown quantum physicist and founder of dialogue, David Bohm (1980), called the *implicate order*—a phenomenon that speaks to the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena. Much of Bohm’s work has been used in the organizational consulting field as it applies to the use of dialogue, a way of conversing that dissolves the perception of separateness. When we apply the Bohmian principles of dialogue, we are able to talk, think, and see together (Scharmer, 2007), accessing a “creative intelligence underlying the whole” (Bohm, 1996, p. 131).

There are two capacities associated with Presencing that are relevant to Imaginative Leadership: sensing social fields and sensing the emerging future. Since the term *sensing* is a key aspect of both concepts below, it is helpful to first take a closer look at its meaning.

Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling are bodily sensations and portals into important ways of being and knowing. Information is available to us somatically that is not available to the intellect. As Alan Briskin (1996) explained, there is an *em-bodied* way of relating to the world around us that relies on the senses and nourishes the soul. When we pay attention to our physical sensations, we hone and attune our senses. This in turn makes us available to a more expanded repertoire of intelligence; it also makes us more alive (Ackerman, 1990).

The senses are connected to a condition known as Being in the Now. In Buddhist circles, the senses are known as an excellent way to enter being in the now. They enable us to enter what Jon Kabat-Zinn (2005) called *original moments* of pure seeing and pure hearing. Instead of seeing and hearing our concepts: our evaluations, judgments, digressions, categorizations, and emotional reactions, we become freed to be in the now, where creative moments can happen.

Philosopher, cultural ecologist, performance artist, and award-winning author, David Abrams (1996) approached this concept in referring to the imagination as an attribute of the senses:

Imagination is not a separate mental faculty (as we so often assume) but rather the way senses themselves have of throwing themselves beyond that which is immediately given, in order to make tentative contact with the other sides of things that we do not sense directly, with the hidden or invisible aspects of the sensible. (p. 58)

Beauty. It is worthwhile to take a slight detour here to more fully explore the idea of beauty, which we might think of as another sense, different from the five physical senses above. We use our five senses to see, hear, touch, taste or smell the beautiful. However, our sensitivity to beauty, our ability to recognize it, have a deep experience of and response to it, requires a certain awareness and capacity for seeing and appreciating. Thus, beauty can be considered an aesthetic sense, one that is awakened when the heart is opened and stirred. When beauty is awakened it greatly enhances our quality of perception. As M. Turner (1996) suggested, beauty might be viewed as the “highest integrative level of understanding and the most comprehensive capacity for effective action” (p. 113). In this regard, beauty may be considered a type of intelligence, enabling us to see important things that were not previously visible.

Beauty is a characteristic of a person, animal, place, object, or idea that provides an immediate and direct experience of pleasure, meaning, or satisfaction. It is a subjective experience that often involves the interpretation of some entity as being in balance and harmony with nature, which may lead to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being. Beauty can also be thought of as harmony, wholeness and goodness, as reflected by the Navajo word *hozho*. This aligns well with Bohm's (1996) approach to beauty as being about coherence and truth. When ideas and creations are brought together in a unified harmonious way, we see them as beautiful, elegant, and somehow right.

A couple other distinctions assist in further understanding this elusive concept of beauty. First, beauty is more than prettiness or glamour, as much of our current culture tends to define it. The latter terms are superficial approaches to beauty that have caused us to repress and dismiss beauty as a superfluous concept that has no merit for serious thinkers. Second, it helps to look at the opposite of beauty. This can include ugly, dull, monotonous, dissonant, grim and other terms that suggest a displeasing affect. From this view, beauty can be considered a gauge of health. When something evokes a positive aesthetic response it might suggest the presence of wellness and fitness, whereas when something evokes a negative aesthetic response it might indicate some sort of malfunction either in the thing, between the thing and the self, or between the thing and its environment.

For our purposes, beauty is a doorway to many aspects of imaginative leadership. Holding a *kalocentric* orientation to the world, where we consider the efficacy of beauty as central to fostering creativity, enables us to recognize dynamics that might remain unseen from other perspectives (Henning 2009). We will now introduce four key

components of beauty that enable us to connect beauty to imaginative leadership.

First, beauty promotes both openness and soulfulness. As we might infer from the mythological stories about Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of beauty who ruled over the hearts of all peoples, there is a connection between beauty and the heart, the ability to love. When we awaken to beauty, when we are able to see the beauty in the other, our hearts open and become rekindled. Our actions become guided by an inner value of love rather than an external value of duty. We might think of beauty (and the aesthetic, which we're using interchangeably with beauty) as synonymous with the sacred: that the way of beauty awakens us and opens us to seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. As some suggest, this provides a path to soulfulness (Hillman, 1975; O'Donohue, 2004). By expanding our capacity to perceive at heightened levels of wholism, beauty contributes to our ability to attain higher and deeper levels of authenticity and intimacy associated with soulfulness. Zen Buddhism also places much importance on aesthetic elements such as beauty and harmony (Glassman & Fields). The aesthetic properties of something determine its ability to attract our attention and relate to it in an appreciative, reverent way.

Second, beauty fosters aliveness. It moves us emotionally and inspires us. When we experience beauty we feel enchanted, excited and more alive. Things seem more vivid and captivating. As Rollo May (1985) suggested, beauty is a higher experience of being human that provides us with a new quality of life. In more recent years there is also a neurobiological explanation for this. The discovery of molecules called *neurocharms* show how the brain's processing power is boosted when we recognize the aesthetic value of something (Turner, F., 1996). These neurocharms become activated during the

experience of beauty, enabling us to see connections, patterns and interrelatedness that may otherwise remain hidden.

Third, beauty is a portal to presence. When we experience beauty our noisy minds are momentarily suspended and all attention is turned to the source of beauty. As we enjoy or are awed by the beauty we become tuned into the here and now, shifting into a state of appreciation. As John O'Donohue (2004) stated, "the greed for destination obliterates the journey" (p. 27). Beauty enables us to enjoy the journey. It has no concern with where we have been or where we are going. Perhaps this is reason for the aphorism "stop and smell the [beautiful] roses."

Fourth, beauty facilitates participatory consciousness. In ways similar to how beauty impacts aliveness, it also fosters our ability to shift to a way of seeing and being that recognizes the relatedness between us and our world. Beauty opens our eyes and hearts, enabling us to see the hidden wholeness amongst us. Because our experience of beauty is direct and not mediated by conscious cognitive thinking, aesthetic engagement provides us with what renowned anthropologist and systems thinker, Gregory Bateson, described as grace—the ability to regain an understanding of the intimate interdependency between the human and nonhuman (Charlton, 2008). Noel Charlton (2008) studied Bateson's prolific published and unpublished writings extensively and found that, especially in his later thinking, Bateson became convinced of the key importance of the aesthetic process in providing a new way of understanding the connection between ourselves and the world. In describing Bateson's view of the link between aesthetic and systems thinking, Charlton wrote about the aesthetic response as "responding to beauty (or ugliness) is recognizing a systematically related being that is an extension, an

enlargement, of our own systemic sense of self" (p. 141). Beauty is a portal into a new world. As Schiller's quote below illustrates, beauty is a type of reflection. But different from our more analytic, left-brain approach to reflection, beauty enables us to be transported into a different world, a different zone, where our senses become highly attuned.

Beauty is indeed the sphere of unfettered contemplation and reflection; beauty conducts us into the world of ideas, without however taking us from the world of sense... By beauty the sensuous man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense.

~ Friedrich von Schiller

Given the potency of beauty as demonstrated in the discussion above, it comes as no surprise to see it as a useful element in the business world, both in product development and external business manifestations such as branding (de Monthoux, 2004; Kerr & Darso, 2008; Pink, 2005; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Rasmus, 2011) and in fostering employee engagement and innovation in organizations (Kerr & Darso, 2008; Merritt, 2010; Rasmus, 2011).

Suzanne Merritt (2010), founder, and for twelve years the director of the Polaroid Creativity Lab, relates her experience with how beauty engages the imagination and enables individuals and teams to draw upon their natural creative abilities. In developing *InSightArt*, an art-based training approach at the Creativity Lab, Merritt and her team identified "eight patterns of beauty: vitality, luminosity, unity in variety, complexity, utility, simplicity, synchronicity, and sublimity" (p. 72). The program was designed "to help participants recognize the eight patterns in nature, experience them in art, and apply them to business" (p. 72). As a result of their experiences with this program, participants developed a heightened sense of awareness of the aesthetic factor in the world around

them, they experienced a transformation in their world views, now able to see deep and meaningful connections that yield higher quality ideas and deeper engagement with the creative process.

Types of Knowing

As we segue from the first aspect of imaginative leadership, attunement, to the second aspect, expression, a closer look at the relevance of different types of knowledge will enhance our understanding of these two aspects of imaginative leadership. A framework that sheds considerable insight into understanding different types of knowledge is provided by John Heron and Peter Reason, pioneers in developing a participatory social science research methodology known as *cooperative inquiry*. Heron and Reason (Heron, 1992, 1996; Heron & Reason, 1997, 2007) have identified four different ways of knowing that inform our understanding of where and how imaginative leadership plays out. These four types of knowledge include:

- *Experiential Knowledge* – which is gained through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy and resonance.
- *Presentational Knowledge* – which emerges from experiential knowledge and provides the first form of expressing meaning and significance through movement, dance, sound, music, drawing, painting, sculpture, poetry, story, drama, and so forth.
- *Propositional Knowledge* – which has to do with knowing ‘about’ something through ideas and theories and is expressed through informative statement.
- *Practical Knowledge* – which is knowing ‘how to’ do something and is expressed in a skill or competence. (p. 183).

We might deduce that imaginative leadership has most to do with the first two types of knowledge described above: experiential and presentational. It is when we engage with the world around us in ways congruent with imaginative leadership that we have most access to these forms of knowledge, that otherwise remain dormant and hidden. These are the forms of knowledge closely associated with what Polanyi (1958/1978) has described as embodied, *tacit knowledge*. These also closely correspond to what organizational researchers, Steven Taylor and Hans Hansen (2005), refer to as *sensory/aesthetic knowledge*, as distinguished from intellectual/propositional knowledge.

Furthermore, it seems that experiential knowledge is highly related to the first part of this literature review: attunement; while presentational knowledge is associated with expression.

Review of Literature in Expression

Expression involves the outer manifestation of an inner action. When we are engaged in expression we are accessing and flowing with the natural rhythms of an inner truth. We are accessing inner knowledge that begins at the preverbal level and bringing this knowing into conscious awareness.

Martha Graham (1973), a reknown dancer and choreographer, spoke to this outer manifestation of an inner action as enabling a unique expression:

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one you in all time, this expression is unique... You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open. (p. 3)

For purposes of our study, expression is the other half, along with attunement, of imaginative leadership. It is the more explicit, visible element. Specifically, expression involves voice and playful engagement.

Parker Palmer, an educator and leadership author/theorist, articulates the essential relationship between our inner and outer worlds when he said:

The inner world, pursued faithfully and well, always takes us back to the world of action...when we return to that world we find ourselves in a different place than before we took the inner journey. (2004, p. 108)

The dynamic process of looping in and out, internal and external, attunement to expression, and back again, is an essential aspect of imaginative leadership. When we're engaged in authentic, creative expression we are generating and sharing unique insights that can only be developed by this copartnership between us and that which we're encountering.

To gain a clearer understanding of the construct of expression and its relevance to imaginative leadership, we will explore its two dimensions: voice and playful engagement. Each of these dimensions sheds a distinctive light onto our understanding of expression.

Before delving into the dimensions of expression, a brief etymological detour offers valuable insights. The term *express* is composed of “ex”, meaning “out of, from” and “press” meaning “to urge, compel, force.” Joining together “ex” and “press” literally means *to press out* (Skeat, 2005). This is consistent with the dictionary definition of express as being to show, manifest, or reveal; to set forth the opinions, feelings of oneself. For instance, when we squeeze or press out an orange, we get orange juice, not tomato juice. In other words, expression assumes the authentic nature of what is inside coming out. This can include what one exudes or emits as well as what one consciously and intentionally expresses. (Random House Webster's, 1997). From this perspective, we

see congruence in the dictionary definition of the term *expression* as an act or action that manifests a feeling; a manifestation represented in words, art, music or movement.

Thus, to a large degree, expression is about communication—the messages and meanings we share with others both verbally and non-verbally, consciously and unconsciously, strategically and spontaneously. It is about communication in the sense of the origins of the term as relayed in its etymological root *communicare*: to share, transmit, divide out; communicate, impart, inform; join, unite, participate in, to make common" (Skeat, 2005).

The notion that what we express is an extension of what is authentically within us is being addressed in fields as diverse as neuroscience, education, and philosophy. When a person is expressing, there is a deep connection between the person and what is being expressed. This is contrasted with when a person is stating facts where there is less of a connection to the self. This dichotomy is best illustrated by the great American philosopher, John Dewey (1934), when he said, "science states meanings; art expresses them" (p. 87). It behooves us to be explicit about an important aspect of expression that might otherwise remain tacit: the emotional side. One way to think about the emotional side that is consistent with imaginative leadership is through the concept of passion. Being emotional and passionate are terms often associated with artists and dismissed as inappropriate by the business world. However, the ability to make an emotional connection with others is increasingly viewed as a key leadership capacity (R. E. Boyatzis, 2005; Goleman, 1995, 2006). Knowing and pursuing our passions, loving what we do, is essential to being in our element as explained by Ken Robinson (2009), an internationally recognized leader in the field of human potential. This thinking is further

validated by others from the fields of positive psychology and strengths psychology (Achor, 2010; Rath & Conchie, 2009; Seligman, 2002). As visible in a closer etymological view of the word e-motion, the term essentially means to move out. In short, embedded in our most effective actions with others is a certain emotional message that moves both them and ourselves. This explains why, storytelling, building trust, and being passionate are recognized as important leadership capacities (Denning, 2007; Secretan, 2004).

Voice. Voice is a way to express a point of view or perspective about something. It can be used as either a noun or a verb. When used as a noun, voice describes contributing a view that is appreciated and taken into consideration, as in having a voice in something. When used as a verb, voice makes something more tangible, visible, and therefore considerable, as in giving voice to something. Most of us associate voice with the written or spoken word, however one's voice comes through clearly through other medium such as movement/body language, photography, and sound. What differentiates voice as a critical dimension of expression as discussed in this research is the concept of a true voice that is in alignment with our inner sensibilities. An example of someone who found and used their true voice is Steve Jobs, the founder and CEO of Apple. In scanning back through Jobs' pre-Apple years and his fascination with calligraphy, we see the influence this aesthetic interest had in the development and expression of his voice through his business endeavors (Jobs, 2005).

To gain a clearer and fuller understanding of this concept and how it relates to imaginative leadership, we will examine voice from two perspectives. The first perspective will entail what is involved in having a voice; the second will explore what is

involved in voicing or using one's voice. To gain greater insights into the first perspective we will use the constructs of authenticity and embodiment; for the second perspective we will work with the concept of presentation and see how, again, embodiment plays an important role.

Authenticity. One perspective about authentic expression is provided by the scholar Maxine Green (1995) in her treatment of Hannah Arendt's view on the subject. Green's perspective contrasts authentic expression with standardized codes of expression. She associates authenticity with a type of mindfulness and standardized codes of expression with thoughtless. Greene discussed how the former releases the imagination and the latter contributes to "moral plague" and "overly facile formulations of the human predicament" (p. 127).

Another way to gain insight into the construct of authenticity is by understanding its relatedness to congruence. Congruence was one of the three cornerstones of the person-centered approach as developed by psychologist Carl Rogers (1951/2003, 1961). His description of the term congruence is, in many ways, interchangeable with authenticity, genuineness, and realness. According to Rogers, when a person is congruent, when they are "more open to [their] experience, less defensive," it tends to foster congruence in others with whom they interact (as cited in Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989, p. 241).

In his popular business book about interpersonal skills, Robert Bolton (1979) defined genuineness as "being honest and open about one's feelings, needs, and ideas" (p. 259). He further described three ingredients that enable one to be genuine: self-awareness, self-expression, and self-acceptance. This is similar to Rogers' approach

where he described a high quality of congruence as being real. Being real requires a high degree of self awareness to enable one to notice what one really thinks and feels and thereby, what one is experiencing. He finishes by saying being real enables one to appropriately express what persistently arises (C. Rogers, 1984).

We can also think of authenticity as being worthy of trust. When we determine that something is real and genuine, we trust it and believe in it. We see it as legitimate and credible. This extends to the relationship between leaders and followers. As demonstrated by the research findings of scholars Dasborough and Ashkanasy (2005) in comparing authentic versus inauthentic leadership influences, leaders who are perceived as being more authentic evoke positive emotions and motivate followers, whereas leaders perceived as being inauthentic tend to evoke negative emotions such as disappointment, disgust, anger and frustration among their followers.

Furthermore, we might learn more about authenticity by examining its inhibitors or enemies: self-deception (Arbinger Institute, 2010), self-consciousness (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004), and professionalism (Rogers, 1984). Authenticity connotes a sense of not being self-conscious, a sense of being free from concern about how others think or expect you to behave/think/feel, and true to your own inner guidance. It is about liberation and release. Furthermore, the affect it has on others is to give them permission to also be free and liberated from the bondage of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness leads to professionalism, a holding back of one's full authenticity. As Carl Rogers (1984) points out, this professionalism acts as a barrier that prevents people from fully connecting with others and that erodes trust. This is the same point Bill George (2007) makes when he talks about conforming to the normative style of our field or

organization and seeking to win the approval of others.

Authenticity has become a popular topic in the current world of leadership theory and practice (Cashman, 1997; Eagly, 2005; Elsner, 2007; Fry & Whittington, 2005; Galvin & O'Donnell, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; George, 2003, 2007; Goffee & Jones 2005; Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Klenke, 2005; Kolditz & Brazil, 2005; Mitchie & Gooby, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Shaw, 2010; Sparrowe, 2005; Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004). Business school professors and authors, Gardner et al. (2005) have devoted much energy to advancing knowledge about authentic leaders. Through their research at the Gallup Leadership Institute, Gardner et al. identified an authentic leader as someone who

(a) knows who they are and what they believe in; (b) displays transparency and consistency between their values, ethical reasoning and actions; (c) focuses on developing positive psychological states such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience within themselves and their associates; (d) are widely known and respected for their integrity. (p. xxiii)

A leading figure who has brought considerable attention and credence to this topic is Bill George (2003, 2007), the former CEO of Medtronic. George has written extensively and persuasively about the importance of authenticity to leadership. Equating authentic leadership with responsible leadership, George's message about the need for authentic leadership has gathered a strong following in the wake of ethical lapses among executives and the ensuing corporate implosions of the past decade. Drawing on his thirty years as a corporate executive as well as his observations of many colleagues at other companies, he stated his belief that "when leaders are dedicated stewards and lead in an authentic manner, they build enduring organizations that do great good for the people and make an enormous difference in the world" (p. xvii). He makes this comment as a way of

distinguishing authentic leaders, who are driven by their sense of stewardship, from inauthentic leaders, those who are driven by personal greed--which he implies is antithetical to authenticity. George went so far as to suggest that “leadership is authenticity” (p. 11). He contrasted this with what corporate America focuses on when they teach leadership concerning style, characteristics, and so forth, that one is supposed to emulate. Reminiscent of Martha Graham’s quote earlier in this section, George asserted that leadership is about “being yourself, being the person you were created to be” (p. 11).

Embodiment. Embodiment is an element of voice that involves knowing and expressing something through the use of bodily, somatic intelligence and bodily, somatic participation. It is about speaking and acting from a place of wholeness (Palmer, W., 2008). For our purposes, we are approaching expression as entailing embodied knowing that leads to embodied action.

Embodiment involves recognizing the body as a source of knowledge and intelligence (Palmer, W., 2008; Pelias, 2008; Strozzi, 2004). It can be described as “giving voice and physicality to words” (Pelias, 2008, p. 186).

Most of the literature on embodiment involves using the construct as a way of knowing (Dewey, 1934; Gibbs, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Merleau-Ponty, 1958; Thompson, Varela & Rosch, 1991). This is of interest to us from the perspective of what it means to have a voice. But there is another perspective that is equally important, concerning embodiment as a *use* of voice. To gain understanding about this latter perspective we will explore embodiment from the perspective of readiness for action and the expression of action that results from embodied knowing. So while embodiment, as a

form of perception or cognition, is related to our examination, our primary focus will be embodiment as a communicative act. Embodied knowing includes listening, paying attention, noticing, attuning, and perceiving, which are less expressive forms of communicative acts. The more expressive forms of communicative acts are associated with embodied action.

For this section, we will limit examination of the literature on embodied knowing--since much of it overlaps with the research in the section on attunement. The majority of our literature review and discussion will be about embodied action.

Embodied Knowing. Embodied knowing is a discipline to which scholars such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) as well as Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch (1991) have made significant contributions. Earlier philosophers such as John Dewey (1934) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1958), as advocates for the lack of separation between body and mind, were inspirations for the scholars cited earlier. Sometimes called the *embodied mind* or the *cognitive unconscious* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), and other times called *embodied cognition* (Varela et al., 1991), the topic explores an understanding of the role of one's body in everyday thinking. This contrasts considerably with conventional approaches to cognition as well-articulated by Mark Johnson (1987): "It has been mistakenly assumed that only a viewpoint that transcends human embodiment, cultural embeddedness, imaginative understanding, and location within historically evolving traditions can guarantee the possibility of objectivity" (p. 175). As contrasted with traditional, disembodied views of knowing, embodied knowing recognizes that knowledge is heavily informed by sensory perception gained through human experiences: "Truth is mediated by embodied understanding and imagination"

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 6). As suggested by another cognitive scientist and scholar, Raymond Gibbs (2006), people's embodied experiences are critical to the ways they think, speak, understand themselves, and others, and the world around them. This tacit knowledge that is acquired over time through experience and social interaction is described by Finnish business scholars, Arja Ropo and Jaana Parvianen (2001), as *bodily leadership knowledge*.

Another theorist, this time a practitioner, who has made important contributions to the understanding of embodied knowledge is Wendy Palmer (2008). As a former dancer and Aikido practitioner, Palmer's somatic work draws heavily from the Aikido traditions. Palmer's approach, which she calls *conscious embodiment* is a way to synchronize the energy of the body, speech and mind with emotions and intuition. For the purposes of providing greater insight into the concept of embodied knowing, Palmer's work uses sensations as a reference point for developing bodily intuition (also called clairsentience). Describing intuition as "being taught from within" (p. 67) Palmer explains how children and animals, who have not been trained to suppress their intuitions, tend to be more sensitive to perceiving deep feelings and hidden intentions. These same feelings and emotions, however, remain unnoticed by more sophisticated adults whose minds have been trained to ignore their intuitions. Using the metaphor of the mind as the student and the body as the teacher, she explains how we need to quiet the mind and surrender into a state of *not-knowing* to create the space from which both creativity and intuition arise.

The importance of intuition is also resounded in the work of another somatics practitioner, Ariana Strozzi (2004). Strozzi, a pioneer in the field of equine-guided education, works with horses, as highly intuitive beings. Through horse therapy, she

helps people see their inner workings and how knowledge that is held in their body, but not consciously and intellectually comprehended, may be interfering with their ability to be authentic and congruent. Intuition is also one of Strozzi's cornerstones with respect to work she does with organizational leaders. Her approach, known as intuitive leadership, entails helping people enter into an intuitive and spacious state of mind where "senses are not clogged with the judge's mental chatter" (p. 119). Strozzi contrasted this intuitive spacious space when we are fully present in our feeling body with being in our head and trying to remember what we believe. Her work with horses seems quite powerful because the horses seem to sense and have no tolerance for when we're in our heads; the horses want us to "communicate in an embodied way, with our feeling body" (p. 120).

Embodied action. Embodied action is the manifestation of embodied knowing. To gain a clearer understanding of embodied action we will explore and discuss several contributors to this field: some of whom, not surprisingly, are those who also write about embodied knowing. We will see that, again, Dewey, Merleau-Ponty, and Aikido inspire and inform current thinking about embodied action. We will also look at the connection to *ecopsychology* to see that embodiment, as a way of inhabiting the world, enables us to have a more intimate connection with the world around us. This will then lead us into looking at the idea of social bodily presence and practices geared toward creating an integrated relationship between body, mind and environment.

Embodied action involves one's inner intention and state of consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 1958). These inner states uniquely shape and color a person's expression. For instance, two different people can say and do the exact same thing, but their expression will vary based on their embodiment of the action. Dewey (1934) spoke

to the relationship between creative imagination (what he regarded as the highest form of imagination) and embodiment in holding that “creative imagination’s goal is free play of the self’s faculties. Its function is to seize meaning and embody it in sensuous form to give rise to feeling, thus representing the freely acting subjective self” (Leddy, 2006, p. 6). While Dewey’s view about embodiment pertains primarily to the creation of art, his theory extends to explain that “all non-mechanistic consciousness, experience, expression and act is art” (1934, p. 285).

The connection between art and embodiment is further elaborated by theorists in the field of leadership as artistry (people whose work will be discussed at greater length later in this dissertation). For our purposes in this section, however, it behooves us to note how several scholars considered embodiment as analogous to art because it is about the concretization of experience: Bathurst & Monin, 2010; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010. These and others working in the field, such as Springbord (2010), espoused the importance of embodied responses to the world; responses that emerge from us when we stay with the senses longer and refrain from quickly jumping to ideas about what’s happening. Ladkin & Taylor remarked, “Leadership is an art when the leader...[comes] back to the evidence of his or her physical senses and making sense in ways congruent with this emergent data” (p. 237).

The relationship between non-verbal communication and embodiment provides further insights into embodied action. We will discuss the perspectives of two somatic practitioners to gain an understanding about this relationship. Earlier, in the section about embodied knowing, we talked about the work of Aikido master Wendy Palmer (2008) and equestrienne Ariana Strozzi (2004). Both of these women also speak to the strong

connection between nonverbal communication and embodied action.

W. Palmer (2008) used the analogy of a radar system to describe nonverbal communication: “we send out vibrations that bounce off other people and come back to us with information” (p. 74). These vibrations can be in the form of body language (such as facial expressions, posture, and gestures) or they can be more invisible underlying emotions and intentions that, while we think we’re hiding them (often times unaware of them ourselves), they are picked up by others. Palmer further suggested that this ability to sense the other’s (and have them sense our) thinking and feeling without use of words becomes especially heightened as we enter into more intimate relationships and engage with increased intimacy with others (people and animals).

Strozzi (2004) used nine principles to construct her concept of intuitive leadership. She classified six of these nine principles as nonverbal communication: factors that impact how we perceive others and how others perceive us. These six principles include: trust, authenticity, confidence, intention, intuition and curiosity. According to Strozzi, whether it is through subtle shifts in our body language or some other energetic quality we emanate, these six principles are conveyed to others in powerful ways and without use of words. She describes these as inner states which we embody. For instance, she tells the story of her experience working with one of her horses where she was initially confused and then marveled at her horse’s response. As she describes the incident, the horse, rather than responding to verbal and gestural cues about when to do what, responded instead to images in Strozzi’s mind. The horse picked up on Strozzi’s intentions. Strozzi related numerous stories of clients working with horses where the horse would read and reflect back their inner, embodied states.

There is another aspect of Strozzi's work that informs our understanding of embodied action by relating it to the field of ecopsychology. Strozzi is one of numerous scholars who have taken a unified perspective of the world where everything is related and thus makes a strong connection between embodiment and a sense of belonging to the larger natural world. Drawing on the perspectives of Dewey and Merleau-Ponty, John Pickering, a psychology professor at Warwick University in the UK writes "Mental life cannot be properly understood without an account of how it emerges, and phylogenetically, from the encounter between the world and intrinsically active, exploratory and playful mental beings (n.d., p. 2)." He goes on to suggest the concept of embodiment evolved from the shift of behaviorism to cognitivism and eventually to embodiment. In some ways, this latest shift is now aligned with ecopsychological theories that consider there to be an emotional bond between human beings and the environment (Pickering, 2007; Reeve, 2006; Scull, 2000; Brown, 1995; Macy & Brown, 1998; Roszak et al., 1995; Scull 2000).

Echoing the above perspective, Paul Crowther (1993), a philosophy professor at the University of Lancaster and a theorist about the ability of art and aesthetic experiences to humanize us, suggested that the "human subject is just one amongst other such sensible beings and things, with whom and with which it is engaged in a constant process of reciprocal interaction and modification" (p. 1). This reciprocal interrelationship between ourselves and the human and beyond-human world around us is guided primarily by our sensori-motor capacities rather than simply our mental acts of cognition.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) wrote about the concept of “embodied spirituality” (p. 566) that also speaks to the human connection with nature and how the environment is part of our being, not something we are separate and apart from. These authors described an embodied spirituality as having “empathy with all things” (p. 567). This empathic connection then paves the way for having aesthetic experiences - the ability to truly see and feel the qualities of what we’re connecting to and thus able to appreciate it in an embodied way (Dewey 1934). This in turn enables adoption of an aesthetic attitude. As Lakoff and Johnson acknowledged, “An embodied spirituality requires an aesthetic attitude to the world that is central to self-nurturance, to the nurturance of others, and to the nurturance of the world itself” (p. 566).

A final aspect of embodied action worth exploring for our purposes is that of social bodily presence. We will explore two perspectives on this topic. The first is by Ropo et al. (2002). These authors presented a view of the social relations entailed in leadership that includes consideration of bodily presence, as contrasted with mainstream leadership thinking about the social dimension of leadership as mainly being about cognition--a mindful activity of people influencing each other. Expanding this notion of the social dimension of leadership, Ropo et al. argued that it is through bodily presence that we are able to share tacit knowledge, a very important type of knowledge not expressible in words (also Polanyi, 1969), but rather expressed through “gaze and touch, speech and listening, resonance of feelings and emotions” (p. 35). This makes operating in today’s virtual world a bit tricky since bodily presence requires co-presence and co-location. Thus the authors suggested that while technology is highly beneficial in many ways, “we

must not lose sight of the importance of face-to-face contact if we wish to be successful at communicating tacit knowledge” (p. 34).

The second perspective on social bodily presence, this time called *embodied presence* comes from Arawana Hayashi, choreographer, dancer, educator, and co-founder with Otto Scharmer of The Presencing Institute. While Hayashi has not written any theoretical articles about her practices, her work is cited by Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaeufer (2010) in their article *In Front of the Blank Canvas: Sensing Emergent Futures*. Hayashi’s work and workshops about *Embodied Presence: The Art of Making a True Move* are also described on The Presencing Institute website (n.d.). Scharmer and Kaeufer mentioned that Hayashi has developed four embodiment practices to help groups and individuals shift from operating in habitual ways to communicating in more playful, exploratory and fuller ways. They quoted Hayashi as describing a workshop exercise where participants create a dance using six movements and then interact as a group using only these movements:

Besides paying attention to doing the movements clearly and completely, we notice spatial arrangement, direction, focus, rhythm, tempo. These are inherent elements in every group interaction, full of communication. However, because we are so caught up in the content of what is being said, we sometimes ignore all these elements that contain information about the reality of the situation. They are all vital expressions of the totality of the field that the community is co-creating. (p. 25)

Playful engagement. Playful engagement is the more interactive aspect of expression. Whereas voice is about presenting one’s view or stance, playful engagement is about the interaction between oneself and others. We are social beings and it’s in our engagement with the world around us that our sense of meaning is shaped and reshaped.

When the conditions are right, the aesthetic experience that results from this engagement can be highly inspiring and enriching in many ways (Berleant, 1991; Dewey, 1934; Granger, 2003 & 2006; Parsons, 2002; Shusterman, 2010).

We are using the metaphorical construct playful engagement, rather than simply engagement, to emphasize the quality of engagement entailed in imaginative leadership. To distinguish this quality, we will take a close look at the idea of play and playfulness to understand how playful engagement is a foundational concept in expression as an aspect of imaginative leadership.

Engagement. To begin, we need to take a look at the meaning of engagement. For our purposes, engagement is a type of giving expression that relates to the level of involvement or commitment one has with a situation. It has to do with one's degree of participation and is demonstrated through action. When one is fully engaged, versus unengaged, or casually engaged, one is giving their fullest expression to a situation. This is the aspect of expression that captures the sense of vitality and aliveness inherent in the term *expressive*. The concept is even more apparent when we consider the deficit side of expression, expressionless, which produces synonyms such as unimaginative, boring, wooden, blank, empty, deadpan, apathetic, unresponsive, and unimpassioned (Urdang & LaRoche, 1978).

Engagement is a dimension of expression for two reasons. First, because engagement is about the inspired nature of our commitment, it suggests we are truly invested in what we are giving expression to. Second, because engagement is all about how we interact with others, our authentic voice is expressed through our interactions - our actions between or among ourselves and others in a situation.

Play.

Artists revive the playful child in us, and art is an invitation to play.
Organizational artists become leaders facilitating play and coaching playfulness.

~ (de Monthoux & Statler, 2008, p. 64: quoting Schiller)

The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.

~ Carl Jung

Play is the means of expression of our creativity. When we lose the capacity for imaginative life, for play, then we “die” to ourselves, we experience a living death which is often masked by a compliant outer shell.

~ Donald Winnicott

The concept of play and playfulness is critical to our understanding of skillfully interacting with each situation as it arises. As we shall see, play and playfulness enable us to maintain a certain openness and interest to what may be occurring in any moment of our lives. They also enable us to deal effectively with differences and complexity.

Play is a nonintellectual activity normally associated with children. In the minds of most Western adults, it is seen as juxtaposed to work (Brown, S., 2009; de Monthoux & Statler, 2008; Donaldson, 1993; Montagu, 1989). Yet, the qualities associated with play are essential for creativity, imagination and inspiration, thus making play an important condition for the expression element of imaginative leadership.

Sensations often associated with play and playfulness include youthfulness, joy, being fully here in the present moment, lightness, ease, being fully alive, being in the zone, enthusiasm, awe, wonder, and other feelings and sensations that feel good, rich, and deeply meaningful. Yet, as wonderful and desirable as play qualities seem, as we become “mature adults” and “effective professionals” we tend to dismiss and relegate these

qualities to the irresponsible and non-productive zones. As the prolific author, humanist and anthropologist Ashley Montagu (1989) pointed out in his book, *Growing Young*, children are wonderful teachers and it behooves us to learn from them. Their capacities in love, wonder, open-mindedness, flexibility, enthusiasm, trust, and compassionate intelligence have much to offer our quest for happiness and success as adults.

Playfulness is a quality that softens us and makes us more pliable, sticky and permeable. In doing so, it brings us into sync with others, enabling us to connect and drop into greater intimacy. When we are playful we are disarmed, less defended and more accessible and open (Brown, S., 2009; Donaldson, 1993). Essayist and poet, Diane Ackerman (1999) described an intensified form of play she calls *deep play*. When engaged in deep play we experience a sense of deep connectedness which produces states of rapture and ecstasy. This in turn awakens in us the most creative, sentient, and joyful aspects of our inner selves.

Playfulness is a trait often associated not just with children but also with artists. While artists can be very serious and intense, they oftentimes possess a childlike innocence. Like children they can enter the imaginary world with ease, oftentimes believing that anything is possible. Peggy Hadden (2004), author of *The Artist's Quest for Inspiration*, described the playful qualities of artists. Using successful artists as examples, she explained that it is through playing that we hone and build our senses. And, as demonstrated earlier in this proposal, it is a connection with the senses that enables us to experience the aesthetic. By extension, one way artists hone their connection to the aesthetic is through development of their senses through play.

Playfulness instills within us a sense of absorption, exuberance and joyfulness

where we enjoy experimenting and trying things out. We take risks. We learn. When we're playing we shift into a less restrictive mode and feel free to do things differently. We tend to engage in a very enthusiastic way, ready to respond to what might happen next. For instance, an image that the word playfulness often evokes is of a puppy dog, eagerly pouncing on something, awaiting a reaction, and then pouncing again.

Playing, being playful, and being a playmate, are different but interrelated facets of this overall condition. Each of these nuances helps us depict different ways of seeing (and deepening our understanding of) this primal, elusive idea of play. When we are playing we are exploring and improvising, we are accessing our imagination. Being playful is about having a joyful, fun attitude and approach to life: seeking novelty and avoiding boredom. Being a playmate is about connecting to the other in deep ways that transcend difference. All three involve interactive ways of relating with whoever or whatever we're engaged with in fresh, preverbal, preconscious ways (Brown, S., 2009; Donaldson, 1993). Thus it is no surprise that this play-oriented way of being enables us to deal effectively with complexity and differences (de Monthoux & Statler, 2008; Palus & Horth, 2002; Gergen, 1991; Pink, 2005).

Communication scholars Kevin Barge and Gail Fairhurst (2008) described play as a discursive practice important for leadership. In their approach to studying communication as a lived experience, they identify five constructs for understanding leadership: "communication (linguistic performance), connection, uniqueness, emergence, and affirmation" (p. 233). They go on to build a practical theory of leadership that shows how play is one of three key practices for influencing leadership communication by enhancing the five constructs. Specifically, they point to the capacity

of play “to produce and sustain energy and openness, elements key to the way people produce meaning together” (p. 241).

Play is often credited with fostering innovation (Kao, 1996; Schrager, 2000; Palus & Horth, 2002). Michael Schrager (2000), researcher at the MIT Media Lab and author of *Serious Play: How the World’s Best Companies Stimulate to Innovate*, suggested that serious play will soon lay at the heart of all innovation strategies. Schrager described *serious play* as playing with possibilities and experimenting with new ideas and in the process producing lots of energy and excitement. The playful disposition of one of American history’s most prolific innovators, Thomas Edison, has been attributed to fostering his success in inventing a large variety of useful and commercially successful products (Gelb & Caldicott, 2007). The concept of serious play is also used by Charles Palus and David Horth (2002), researchers and program managers at the Center for Creative Leadership, as one of six competencies for navigating complex challenges. They describe the qualities of play as including curiosity, exuberance, spontaneity, improvisation, uninhibited movement and thought, and a feeling of being outside of time. Their quote: “through play the mind falls in love with the object of play” (p. 108) is an extension of Carl Jung’s quote referenced at the beginning of this section. The authors also describe other valuable fruits of play, such as its ability to identify patterns within chaos and to foster a shared sense of complex challenges. Much of this is due to play’s ability to shift us into a more expansive rather than constrictive stance. Palus and Horth wrote, “Serious play is a matter of...[holding] your deepest beliefs lightly for a moment, rather than squeezing more tightly when they are challenged” (p. 107).

Aesthetic play, like serious play, is a term that describes the value of play-orientations in organizational life (de Monthoux & Statler, 2008). Scholars, authors and practitioners, Pierre Guillet de Monthoux and Matt Statler, contended that when people engage in a certain type of playful practice within organizations they are better equipped to deal with complexity and differences. Coming from an aesthetic perspective that values the embodied dimensions of experience elicited by nonverbal visual art, these authors describe how aesthetics is connected to ethics and are key to understanding organizational principles. They proposed that it is through aesthetics that we can discover the “common space, the common ground, on the basis of which humans can cooperate and organize” (p. 426). This perspective underpins the authors’ notion that aesthetic play is an organizing principle. More specifically, that aesthetic play is a form of mediation that arises from the playful and aesthetic dimension of engaging in shared practices through which the organization takes shape. They further suggested that in the current *experience economy* “the activity of workers in firms is not a means to the end of producing something, but a playful performance that is an end itself” (p. 428).

Improvisation, an emergent rather than planned process, may also be considered a play-oriented approach (Cowan, 2007; Montuori, 2003; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Palus & Horth, 2002). Alfonso Montuori (2003), a former professional musician who is currently a professor at the California Institute of Intergral Studies and researcher on creativity, innovation, improvisation and complexity, explained his view on improvisation as a continuous learning and inquiry process: “Life is participation and participation is creation and improvisation, because life does not occur in a vacuum, it occurs always in a network of inter-retro-actions and of organization, in a constant play of order, disorder,

and organization and ongoing learning” (p.246). This relationship between learning and play is further reinforced by organizational learning experts Fred Kofman and Peter Senge (1993) as they described that “learning often occurs best through ‘play’, through interactions in a transitional medium where it is safe to experiment and reflect” (p. 18).

Neuroscience also provides valuable insights into understanding playful engagement. When playing we are often expressing preverbal and right brain oriented ways of knowing (Brown, S., 2009). Jaak Pankseep (1998), a professor of psychobiology at Bowling Green University has studied the neural circuitry of play in detail. In his highly acclaimed book, *Affective Neuroscience*, he provided a neuroscientific explanation of why playing is fun and produces joy. As endorsed by the field of positive psychology, this sense of joy, primes us for openness, exploration and engagement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 2003; Seligman, 2011).

Review of Literature on the Marriage of Leadership and Artistry

“Artistry is an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing, though different in crucial respects from our standard model of professional knowledge. It is not inherently mysterious; it is rigorous in its own terms.”

~ Donald Schon

Brief historical overview. As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation proposal, Mary Parker Follett’s work was instrumental in helping me conceptualize the idea of imaginative leadership. Specifically, I was intrigued with one of Follett’s theories related to how the creative process can benefit conflict situations, enabling a more relational alternative to either domination or compromise (Kolb, Jenson, & Shannon, 1996). Follett described a third way, a circular response, which enables integration: where all the ideas are integrated into a new perspective. Author Alan Briskin and his colleagues (2009) described Follett’s sense of the aesthetic as “a way of seeing patterns

of wholeness, coherence and beauty (p. 93). While Follett's ideas about creative leadership may not have caught on immediately, they percolated enough to shape the next phase of thinkers.

One of Follett's contemporaries and an early writer about the aesthetics of management was Charles Barnard author of the 1938 publication *Functions of the Executive*. Drawing upon his experience as an AT&T executive in the 1920's and 1930's as well as Follett's influence, he proposed that decision-making is more of an art than a science (as cited in Gabor & Mahoney, 2010). Barnard (1938) wrote that the decision-making process "transcends the capacity of merely intellectual methods and techniques of discriminating the factors of the situation. The terms pertinent to it are 'feeling,' 'judgment,' 'sense,' 'proportion,' 'balance,' [and] 'appropriateness.' It is a matter of art rather than science, and [it] is aesthetic rather than logical" (p. 235). Recent advances in neuroscience, while not dismissing the importance of more reasonable parts of the brain, such as the neo-cortex, show that emotion and feeling are just as crucial as logic in making good decisions (Damasio, 2000; Lehrer, 2009).

Almost 40 years later, in 1977 Abraham Zaleznik, a Harvard Business School Professor, wrote about the distinctions between managers and leaders in a Harvard Business Review article. In this article, he argued that leaders have more in common with artists than with managers. Good managers, in their quest for control, order and predictability are often concerned with imposing order on potential chaos; while good leaders use imagination and creativity to tolerate chaos and lack of structure, and to avoid premature closures. He described another distinction as leaders relating with more

empathetic and intuitive capacities whereas managers tend to be relate to organizational actors according to their role.

During the past two decades there seems to be a continually increasing fascination with the topic of marrying leadership and artistry. While there was some activity in the late 1980's, most of the more rigorous explorations began occurring in the 1990's and 2000's. This interest has been shared by scholars and practitioners alike and is often characterized as organizational aesthetics or aesthetic leadership.

Among the first to introduce this concept to the mainstream was Max DePree (1989, 1992), the former Chairman of Herman Miller who wrote about leadership as an art (1989) and then likened leadership to jazz (1992). Pointing out the similarities between a jazz band and servant leadership, DePree described how both combine "the unpredictability of the future with the gifts of the individuals" (1992, p. 9). Touching upon the concepts of beauty, listening, caring, serving, storytelling, possibility thinking, relationships and intimacy, DePress proposed that leadership is more of an art than a science (1989).

Another early contributor to the field, this time from the slightly more scholarly perspective, was Garth Morgan. As a professor, consultant and author, G. Morgan wrote extensively about the importance of images and metaphor in shaping organizational life (1997a, 1997b). Working with the concepts of *imaginization* and *metaphoric thinking*, G. Morgan suggested that this approach enables us to see organizations in new ways and opens up creative new possibilities for change. His theory claimed that metaphoric thinking provided a way to see possible new images of an organization while also generating the shared understanding needed for producing creative action.

Yet another early contributor to the field was Jean Houston (2004) in writing about *Social Artistry*. Houston's contribution is interesting because she is neither a traditional scholar nor an organizational practitioner but rather a giant in the field of human potential. Yet, instead of writing her seminal article on social artistry in a psychological or spiritually-oriented publication, she wrote it for a business journal, applying the ideas of social artistry to culture transformation. Houston (2004) described social artists as "leaders in many fields who bring the same order of passion and skill that an artist brings to his or her art form, to the canvas of our social reality"(from her website). The social artist's medium is the human community in which they are paradigm pioneers who able to see trends and emergent patterns out of apparent chaos and evocateurs who help us re-mythologize and reweave our stories in light of current needs.

It was shortly after Jean Houston introduced the concept of the social artist that another important figure offered a contribution to the marriage of leadership and artistry. In 1994 David Whyte, a poet who applied his artistry to organizational consulting work, wrote a best-selling book titled *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and the Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America*. The theme of this book is that poetry has the capacity to elucidate forces, dynamics, issues, that previously had no voice. Describing poetry as "the conversation between you and the sacred otherness of the world" (as cited in Essex & Mainemelis, 2002, p. 149), he explained how this work fosters real conversations at work.

Organizational aesthetics. Organizational aesthetics is an aesthetic way of understanding organizational life. It may be considered a subgroup of the organizational development field.

One of the scholars most responsible for introducing an aesthetic approach to organizational studies is Antonio Strati (1992, 1999; Strati & Guillet, 2002), an industrial sociology professor at the University of Trento in Italy. Strati was an early proponent for examining various aesthetic methods and approaches to study organizations. In revealing the importance of an aesthetic understanding of organizations and the aesthetic dimension of people's everyday lives, he distinguished between aesthetic/artistic knowledge and intellectual/rational knowledge (Strati & Guillet, 2002). He urged us to consider the role aesthetics play in organizational change processes because they enables us to include sensorially meaningful dimensions that otherwise remain hidden and unaccounted for. Other scholars exploring the field of organizational aesthetics also discuss the distinction explaining how aesthetic knowledge, which tends to be about felt experience and is generated through sensing, feeling, intuition, and empathy, tends to shape and precede more intellectual, cognition based forms of knowledge (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Aesthetic knowledge is comprised of more embodied ways of knowing and enables us to access and work with a more implicit, subjective knowledge that Polanyi (1958) coined *tacit knowledge*. Unfortunately, because this knowledge cannot be expressed and managed in traditional ways – because of *aesthetic muteness* (Taylor, S. S., 2002) – it almost always neglected. Yet, this is where the juicy, life-giving and genuine stuff is. Aesthetic knowledge is less about what is *true* and more about what is *possible* (Gagliardi, 1996). And it is through sensory knowing, also known as *aesthetic intelligence* (Mucha, 2009) – where we fully engage our senses – that we begin to partake of this wealth of tacit knowledge.

In addition to offering access to new, valuable and different kinds of knowledge, an aesthetic perspective also enables us to see other aspects of an organization that might appear invisible to a non-aesthetic lens. For instance, it enables us to study connection and relationality within organizations (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). This might be quite useful for understanding the social networks and the informal aspects of organizations, an area that been receiving increasing attention in recent years (Katzenbach & Khan, 2010; Li, 2010; Shirky, 2008, 2010). An aesthetic perspective of organizations “focuses on the sensual, perceptive, communicative and emotional” (Marotto, Roos, & Victor, 2007, p. 4), what might be considered the aesthetics of social interaction (Taylor, S. S., 2002), and thus enables us to attend to how things really get done in organizations rather than how they are supposed to get done (Cross & Parker, 2004; Kleinbaum & Tushman, 2008; Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993).

Jazz, play, and the performing arts also offer insights into how the aesthetic alternative illuminates organizational principles that more rational, reductionistic, empirical methods fail to notice. For instance, both jazz improvisation and organizations may be considered complex systems of collective activity (Barrett 2000). In describing a jazz band as a prototype of an organization that values emergence and innovation, jazz pianist and organizational scholar Frank Barrett (2000) offered the following:

Jazz bands consist of diverse specialists living in turbulent environments, interpreting vague cues, processing large chunks of information, formulating and implementing strategy simultaneously, extemporaneously inventing responses without well-thought-out plans and without a guarantee of outcomes, discovering the future that their action creates as it unfolds. (p. 229)

Barrett goes on to describe how jazz musicians have much to teach organizations in cultivating an aesthetic of surrender, appreciation, attunement and unfolding. It is

aesthetic awareness and aesthetic sensibilities that enable us to have embodied experiences that in turn enable us to notice what is unfolding and emerging in the moment. The aesthetic enables us to cultivate *poetic wisdom* (Vico, 1774/1968) by experiencing wonder, awe and thus a fresh perception of the ordinary world (Barrett, 2000). It parallels what Buddhists call *beginner's mind*. Thus, an aesthetic perspective is a relatively radical alternative to conventional approaches to problem-solving and sense-making that relies on using pre-existing categories and repetition that result in disembodied, anaesthetized experiences. (Note that anaesthetic, a numbing of the physical senses that causes an inability to perceive, is the opposite of aesthetic). Disembodied experiencing in turn results in stale knowledge uninformed by unfolding emergent possibilities and uninspired action that may not be coherent and collaborative.

This leads us to another concept situated within the marriage of organizational leadership and artistry: that of *appreciative inquiry*. Aesthetic ways of knowing and appreciative, affirmative ways of knowing are closely related. Consistent with Barrett's observations about how cultivating an appreciative way of knowing enables us to understand social complexity (Barrett, 2000; Barrett & Fry, 2005), theorists in the field of appreciative inquiry emphasize that we can't understand social reality without paying attention to aesthetic experience (Adler, 2007; Avital, Boland & Cooperrider, 2008; Nissley, 2002, 2004, 2008; Zandee, 2008). David Cooperrider, one of the founders of appreciative inquiry, laid out its premise in explaining that this approach to organizational change is about "the artful creation of positive imagery" (2001, p. 32). The idea of artful creation is further elaborated by Nick Nissley, the Executive Director of Leadership Development at the Banff Center, who established appreciative inquiry as

a form of aesthetic organizational discourse (Nissley, 2004). In understanding appreciative inquiry as a form of aesthetic communication, we are able to see organizations as narrative rich cultures with tremendous cooperative capacity (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, changing and operating at a pace too rapid to make linear sense of, we need intuitively-guided approaches, such as improvisation to organizational success (N. Adler, 2007; Montuori, 2003). And artists have much to teach us in this arena: “our artistic traditions provide a better guide for creating possibility...than have most of our managerial models and approaches” (N. Adler, 2007, p. 222). Artists also have something to teach us about intrinsic motivation—creating meaning that inspires people—as an alternative to most motivational systems in business that focus on extrinsic rewards.

Another way to understand the marriage of leadership and artistry is to look at *aesthetic experience* within the context of organizational studies. This has been explored by another organizational scholar who has contributed to the field of organizational aesthetics, Professor Pasquale Gagliardi from The Catholic University of Milan. He defined aesthetic experience as “constituted by sensory knowledge rather than intellectual knowledge, expressive action rather than instrumental action, and as being a form of communication different than speech” (1996, p. 566). As discussed in the section above, aesthetic knowledge is embodied rather than a strictly mental understanding, taking into consideration the symbolic and experiential dimensions of organizations, and thus enables an organization to attend to issues of *aesthetic reflexivity* (Ewenstein & White, 2007). Understanding the concept of aesthetic reflexivity may provide organizations with

greater appreciation and insight into the social context in which people's work becomes meaningful and in understanding the local norms and values that mediate the work.

In addition to the scholars and practitioners above who have explored the relationship between aesthetics and organizational studies, numerous others have also made contributions to the field. While for our purposes in this study we have demonstrated sufficient understanding of this area, a more in-depth investigation can be conducted by including the works of Pierre Guillet de Monthoux(2004), Wendelin Küpers (2002, 2007), Stephen Linstead and Heather Hopfl (2002), Anne Witz (Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003), and others.

Aesthetic leadership.

In the future leaders will not be remembered for their professional, technical or cost cutting skills but for their wisdom, empathy, presence, intuition and artistry. It will be a way of leading that is more relational focused and based upon creating an empathic resonance with others as a networker, connector and convener of webs and communities.

~ Michael Jones (2010, p. 1)

Moving on from the field of organizational aesthetics, we can gain further understanding about the marriage of leadership and artistry by looking at theories specifically from the closely related field of *leadership aesthetics*. Leadership aesthetics is a relatively robust field with many scholarly and practitioner theorists paving the way during the past two decades (Adler, 200, 2010; Austen, 2010; Austin & Devin, 2003, 2010; Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Bathurst et al., 2010; Biehl-Missal, 2010; Cowan, 2007; Darso, 2009; Deal & Peterson, 1994; De Ciantis, 1995, 1996; de Monthoux et al., 2007; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006; DePree, 1989, 1992; Dobson, 1999; Hans et al., 2007; Hatch et al., 2005; Howard, 1996; Jones, 2006, 2010a; Klein & Diket, 1999; Ladkin, 2008; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Merritt, 2010; Mitra et al., 2010; Nissley, 2010; Palus &

Horth, 1996, 2002; Reaves & Green, 2010; Richards, 1995; Ropo et al., 2002; Sauer & Ropo, 2007; Scharmer & Kaefer, 2010; Siler, 2010; R. A., 1996; Springborg. 2010; Thomson, 2010; Wicks & Rippin, 2010; Woodward & Funk, 2004, 2010).

Many of the approaches employed by these practitioners are based on a hermeneutic perspective that “views leading as a constantly emergent, interpretive act—as continually seeing with new eyes” (Woodward & Funk, 2010, p. 301). Thus the leader is a crafter of meaning (Woodward & Funk, 2010; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Palus & Horth, 1996; Springborg, 2010), rather than a *description-maker* (Springborg, 2010), which requires that one start with real experience, aesthetic experience, as many of the authors above might suggest. This is opposed to a behaviorist approach that focuses on building skills and competencies that will enable someone to perform specific identified actions and display certain traits. Other perspectives that most of the approaches above share are

- leadership as *relational* – leadership as co-constructed together by leaders and followers (Köping, 2007; Ladkin, 2008; Soila-Wadman, 2007).

- leadership as *embodied* – leadership as a product of our bodily senses rather than solely our discursive intellect (de Monthoux, 2007; Ladkin, 2008; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Rippin, 2010; Ropo et al., 2002; Soila-Wadman, 2007; Springborg, 2010; Woodward & Funk, 2010).

- leadership as *perception* – that through an aesthetic sensibility leaders become more fully aware of reality (Woodward & Funk, 2010).
- leadership as *integrative* – leadership needs to take a wholistic perspective and work from a both-and rather than an either-or orientation. (Follett, 1949a, 1949b; A. L. Johnson, 2007; Martin, 2007, 2009; Sjostrand, 1997),

- leadership as *fluid* – has to do with being able to look and act from diverse points of view...having a fluid perspective is based on the idea that how we see changes based the angle and timing from which view something. (de Monthoux, 2007; Palus & Horth, 1996; Woodward & Funk, 2010).

We will take a three-fold approach to examining the cross-fertilization of the arts and leadership. First, we will look at the large variety of artistic mediums that have served theorists as a lens through which to understand the aesthetics of leadership. These include: the verbal arts (such as poetry and storytelling), the performing arts (such as music, dance, movement/somatics, theatre, symphony, orchestra, jazz, piano) and the visual arts (such as drawing, collage, photography, doll-making, film-making, curating, and art viewing). Second, we will explore how some practitioners are using the arts and art-making as a process for leadership development. We will conclude this section by briefly looking at several exemplars from both the art world and the business world that demonstrate how leadership and art might be integrated.

Artistic media. In exploring the literature related to metaphoric uses of artistic mediums to study leadership, we find that the plethora of media is categorized into three areas: verbal arts, performing arts, and visual arts. Determining which category a particular medium falls into is not always clear, as some mediums can easily fit into more than one category. For instance, storytelling is categorized as a verbal art; however, since storytelling is oftentimes done for an audience, it might also fit into the performing arts category. Another example is performing arts that are events that typically last only as long as the actual performance. However, if a performing art, such as a play is filmed, the film of the play is a visual art, which lasts long past the performance. In this

example, it could be argued that the play becomes a visual art, too. While it is clear these overlaps exist, we do not believe the impact will alter our research. We will begin by reviewing the work done in the realm of verbal arts.

Verbal arts. The verbal arts have been used by many theorists as a way to enhance leadership. In addition to the art of reading, writing, and listening to poetry, verbal arts also include mediums such as storytelling, metaphors, and various oral and narrative traditions. We might even include conversations and small talk into this category, though they also overlap with performing arts (which will be discussed later). These mediums invoke a *poetic frame of mind* that consciously use metaphors to make sense of experience (Palus & Horth, 2002). We will discuss poetry and storytelling.

Poetry. Earlier we discussed the contributions of David Whyte (1994, 2001, 2002, 2004), the person who has perhaps done the most to illuminate the power of poetry in business and leadership. For Whyte (2007), the value that poetry provides to leadership relates to the expansion and broadening of our language. Whyte feels our language has become quite narrow and shallow especially in the postmodern workplace. He uses poetry to convey a fuller understanding of what's going on and to foster richer, more authentic and inviting conversations.

Similarly, author, educator, and activist, Parker Palmer (2007), espoused the importance of leaders taking the inner journey toward living an examined life by awakening to the inner dynamics that drive their actions. For those who want to take this journey of getting in touch with the soul's imperatives, poetry and other like forms can open the doors: "Inner truth is best conveyed by the language of the heart, of image and

metaphor, of poetry, and it is best understood by people for whom poetry is a second language” (p. xxxi).

This thinking is further witnessed in the book, *Leading from Within* (Intrator & Scribner, 2007) which brings together 93 leaders from varying sectors to reflect on a poem of significance to them. The authors evoked these leaders’ stories and caught glimpses of what animates these folks in their work and life. So much of that life force goes undetected and unaccessed in the world that many businesspeople inhabit, a world that values “practicality” and its lens of rationality, predictability and efficiency. As poetically shared by John Ciardi, a teacher, poet and social critic who speaks of the dangers fraught by excessive practicality: “An ulcer is the unkissed imagination taking its revenge for having been jilted. It’s an unwritten poem, an undanced dance, an unpainted watercolor” (as quoted in Intrator & Scribner, 2007, p. xxiii).

Others such as Charles Palus and David Horth (2002), from the Center for Creative Leadership and authors of numerous articles on the topic of leadership and artistry, identify poetry as a key tool in developing the creative competencies of leaders. In their recent book, *The Leader’s Edge*, they related two stories about the power of poetry. One story involves a former VP of marketing who has connected her avocational interest in poetry with her business (specifically strategic planning work) and credits being a poet with her ability to make connections between disparate things. She stated: “I’m going to see [business problems] much more horizontally and holistically: I’m going to connect the dots more quickly. Being a poet means that I play. I play with ideas. I play with words. I juxtapose things” (as cited in Palus & Horth, 2002, p. 96). A second (story) entails the use of haiku at a coal-fired power plant. Workers now keep a haiku book, a

collection of haiku poems that the workers write for themselves and for each other, relating stressful experiences, especially in planned and unplanned power outages. Using these poems the workers are able to recall past events which provided rich learning opportunities, connect with each other more deeply and affectionately, and enjoy some levity to balance out the extreme stress caused by the outages.

The fit between poetry and leadership is further illuminated by the work of Clare Morgan, Director of the Creative Writing program at the University of Oxford and a facilitator for workshops on poetry and business to organizations. Morgan and co-authors Lange and Buswick (2010) described the virtues of poetry for business, especially as related to complex decision-making. Based on their experience in conducting poetry workshops for clients of The Boston Consulting Group, the authors have noticed that reading poetry creates conceptual spaces different from the ones normally generated in a business setting. In these spaces, the thinking that is generated tends to “[be] associative rather than casual, imaginative rather than deductive, offer new ways of assessing relations between things and encourage a radical skepticism about the nature of ‘fact’” (p. 23). For instance, the authors describe a situation where they worked with a CEO to design and facilitate a strategy retreat with his management team One of the exercises they facilitated during this workshop was having the team members reflect together on a poem, “Traveling Through The Dark” by William Stafford, specially selected for its ability to highlight the issues involved with making tough choices that affect the lives of others.

Figurative language, such as metaphors, is prevalent in poetry. The ability to produce and understand figurative language requires us to engage with all senses. It

enables us to hear the rhymes and rhythms, see with our mind's eye, and in doing so drop into a visceral experience (Gibbs, 1994; Healy, 2005; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Morgan et al., 2010). Evidence from the field of *neuroaesthetics*, a subfield within neurosciences, (Brown, S. & Dissanayake, 2009; Cinzia & Vittorio, 2009; Ramachandran, 2003; Zeki, 1999) now show that when we flex our cross-modal thinking capabilities we are able to see in prophetic ways as artists and poets tend to see.

One last reference on poetry is from a theoretical doctoral dissertation written by Amrit Kasten-Daryanini (2007), a Ph.D. student at Antioch University entitled *Poetic Leadership*. Her research suggested that leadership might be viewed as “an activity that unites a lyrical intellect with keenly felt emotion for the purpose of producing changes in the consciousness of self and others” (p. v). An important aspect of this poetic consciousness that aids leadership is identified as “the ability to feel the rightness or wrongness” (p. 182) of what’s going on and of decisions.

Storytelling. Another of the verbal arts that has received considerable use in enhancing leadership is storytelling. This aesthetic technique is often cited as a key leadership communication competency (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Brown, S., Denning, Groh, & Prusak, 2005; Clark, 2004; Denning, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007; Gardner, 1995; Hatch et al., 2005, Katzenbach & Khan, 2010; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Palus & Horth, 2002; Pink, 2005; Secretan, 2004; Silverman, 2006; Weick, 2001). Leaders who are effective at storytelling tend to resonate with and help others connect more deeply with the issues at hand. But in addition to helping inspire and move others, the process of formulating a story to tell often causes leaders to dig more deeply into who they are and what they are about and thus strengthens the inner place from which they operate

(Baldwin & Linnea, 2010; Scharmer, 2007).

It behooves us to consider five leading researchers who have made significant contributions to the study of storytelling and leadership. One of the leading figures in advancing the concept of storytelling as a leadership capacity is Stephen Denning, a professor at the Leadership Academy at the University of Maryland, former program director of The World Bank and author of numerous books and articles on this topic (2001, 2004, 2006, 2007). Denning took an approach to leadership consistent with Burns' definition of transformational leaders as leaders who change the world for the better "by generating enduring enthusiasm for a common cause [and] their followers themselves become leaders" (p. 22). Denning explained the important role that *narrative intelligence* plays in enabling leaders to communicate complex ideas and inspire others into enthusiastically taking action (2007). He defined narrative intelligence as

the ability to understand the world in narrative terms, to be familiar with the different components and dimensions of narratives, to know what different patterns of stories exist and which narrative patterns are most likely to have what effect in which situation. (p. 45)

Denning (2007) contrasted storytelling with traditional models of communication that appeal to one's reason, by explaining how stories appeal to the listener's heart. While traditional communication might give the analytical mind something to chew on and get excited about, it does little to emotionally engage listeners and enable them to generate a new story in their own minds. Narratives are more in line with how human beings think and make decisions, thus narratively-based communication that captures the richness, texture and objectives of human experience tends to engage others more effectively.

In exploring the leadership narrative of eleven leaders across various domains, the renowned psychologist, author and academic Howard Gardner (1995) developed a

perspective on the nature of leader as storyteller “whose stories must wrestle with those that are already operative in the minds of an audience” (p. xi). This is clearly a perspective of the leader as artist, working with the medium of words to create a masterpiece. This idea is eloquently described by Warren Bennis in a testimonial to Gardner’s book as he stated: “Effective leaders put into words the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others. They create communities out of words” (as cited in Gardner, 1995, back cover). However, it is not enough that the leader tell a good story, “it is equally crucial that the leader embody that story in his or her life” (Gardner, 1995, p. ix). It is interesting to further note how Gardner talked about leaders and stories. Using the term *relate* instead of *tell*, he emphasized that presenting a story entails both the use of words and embodiment of these works to bring additional power to their stories. This is similar to the way artists use artistic expression to convey stories and stretch the consciousness of their audience. This embodiment does not necessarily mean a dramatization in the literal sense but more of exuding that the leader authentically and wholeheartedly owns the story being shared with others.

Another person whose work is relevant to our exploration of leadership and storytelling is Christina Baldwin, an author and seminar leader on the topics of storytelling, participatory leadership and women’s leadership (Baldwin, 2005; Baldwin & Linnea, 2010). Baldwin described story as “a map of human experience” with a “chronology, character, scene and insight” (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010, p. 95). Quoting the famous anthropologist Laurens van der Post’s compelling statistics, she posits that 90 percentage of what we learn is through stories (through association with others’ experiences rather than through our own direct experience). She described how story is “a

powerful medium that creates relationships in that other people become real to us through story” (p. 98).

Similar to Follett’s circular description of leadership Baldwin used the circle to describe her leadership framework. Comparing the circle to the more traditional, hierarchically oriented triangle archetype, the circle represents a more collaborative worldview of organizations (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010). Stories help create and maintain this communal space where people feel linked with one another because “embedded in the narrative of our lives are common human values, impulses and longings” (Baldwin, 2005, p. 12).

Like Gardner, Baldwin also emphasized the importance of narrative usage not just to convey ideas but also as a way to inform us about our own identity and make sense of our own lives. Pointing to the interplay between experience and narrative, she explains how we interpret everything that happens through the veil of story. By taking what’s happening in life events and combining them with our thoughts, feelings and reactions, story becomes a sense-making activity (2005): “Story is the [crystallization] of thought, turning it into something digestible” (p.10).

Baldwin (2005) also related the importance of both telling and receiving stories, explaining that “in the act of telling a story, we create a world we invite others into. And in the act of listening to a story we accept an invitation into experiences that are not our own, although they seem to be” (p. 7).

Another contribution is made to the arena of storytelling and leadership by academics Mary Jo Hatch, Monika Kostera & Andrzej Kozminski (2005), authors of a

research-based book about the aesthetics of leadership. This research entailed reviewing and analyzing 30 interviews with CEO's conducted by The Harvard Business Review from 1989 -1998. Seeking to understand the aesthetic aptitude of the CEO's--the values of artistic courage and ethical conscience--the intention of these authors was "to highlight the humanistic aspect of leadership" (p. 2) to complement the technical, rational side of organizing.

What surprised these researchers was the discovery of how the CEO's used a preponderance of stories to "illustrate their points, convey their corporate or personal history and to celebrate acts of courage, their own or those of others" (Hatch et al., p. 12). Recognizing the power these stories had on themselves, the researchers then decided to more carefully investigate the aesthetic force provided by leadership storytelling. In doing so, they explore the difference between storytelling and analytical modes of discourse. Storytelling tends to invoke narrative thinking, which connects us to one another and the subject matter, as opposed to logico-scientific discourse, such as rational explanation and factual descriptions, which produces more linear thinking and rational analysis. This point is further elaborated by looking at the differences between narrative and discursive thinking (Bruner, 1990; Worth, 2008). Discursive thinking, which also includes deductive reasoning and logic, eventually leads to the creation of procedures that can verify the certainty and truth of our knowledge; whereas, narrative thinking produces a different kind of knowledge, one which evokes our capacity to imagine, to create in the mind's eye a mental image or model of the situation that is described and which we can adapt as circumstances change and one which does not require verification in the same sense as that required by discursive reasoning (Worth, 2008). Thus, storytelling has

stronger communicative powers than non-story modes of discourse because it not only engages listeners more fully and deeply, and fosters enhanced meaning generation but also encourages listeners to repeat the tales (Hatch et al., 2005), which in turn tends to generate greater dialogue and conversation (Denning, 2007).

Scholars Steven Taylor, Dalmar Fisher, and Ronald Dufresne offer yet another perspective on the relationship between storytelling and leadership (2002). Taking an aesthetic perspective and looking at storytelling as a folk art, these authors focused on the meaning-making aspect of stories, especially in organizational settings. Looking at the literary and dramatic qualities of storytelling, they developed an aesthetic theory of how and why storytelling enhances organizational learning.

Part of Taylor et al.'s theory follows on our discussion about narrative versus discursive thinking. Synonymous with narrative thinking is abductive reasoning (as contrasted with deductive and inductive reasoning). We might think of deductive reasoning as moving from the general to the specific while the inductive is about moving from the specific to the general, but abductive reasoning, which is often associated with the greatest advances in science, is altogether different and involves intuitive leaps that arise through felt meaning rather than coming through a conscious logical process (Martin, 2007; Peirce, 1957). Good stories, those that produce a strong aesthetic experience, provide felt meaning, a feeling of connectedness and enjoyment. In contrast, bad stories produce a weak aesthetic experience and "leave the audience to make sense of the story intellectually, without a holistic felt meaning and sense of personal connection to guide them" (Taylor et al., p. 317).

Once again, as in the perspective of the others reviewed above, these authors also suggest that the leader be an active participant in the storytelling organization, not just as the teller of stories but also as an active and enthusiastic listener who “attends to stories as valuable sources of information, not as arguments to be rebutted” (Taylor et al., p. 326). Plus, as the authors suggest, no one person has the whole story but each person holds an important piece. In helping convey multi-layered meanings, artful stories can help organizations build their collective wisdom.

While much else has been written about storytelling and organizational, managerial, and leadership effectiveness (Boje, 1991, 1994, 1998; Boyce, 1995, 1996; Fleming, 2001; Palus & Horth, 2002,), we have chosen the above examples as the most appropriate examples to illuminate the framework for this study. Our examples provide an understanding of how storytelling is a verbal art that enables leaders to better participate in building healthy organizations.

Performing arts. Another way to understand the aesthetics of leadership has been to explore it through the lens of the performing arts, particularly dance, music, and drama. Drawing heavily on the ideas of embodiment, movement, and somatic intelligence, these arts have much to offer leadership practices. What is somewhat unique about the contribution of the performing arts metaphor to leadership is that it offers a way to explore using the self as instrument. For example, as in dance, music, and drama, the use of self in creating the artistic expression is especially pronounced. The performing arts also provide an especially interesting application of aesthetic sensibilities because they usually involve group endeavors. As such, there tends to be a certain collaborative, communal, coordinating, cooperating dynamic at work in these artistic settings.

Authors Robert and Janet Denhardt (2006) captured the intersection between leadership and the performing arts quite eloquently. They described a dance that takes place where leaders

are moving expressively and rhythmically, leaping into the future with confidence and imagination...acting based on intuition and empathy, relying on their “feel” for the situation...[being] fully in the moment, completely present to what is happening in the here and now...[able to] sense what is around them. (p. 3)

This description captures many of the qualities that theorists who look at leadership from a performing arts perspective tend to see: the improvisational, fully attuned, expressive way of engaging with the world around us.

In the proceeding pages, we will explore some examples of work done in the intersectional areas of leadership and dance, music, and theater. We begin to get a clearer understanding of what management theorists Kouzes and Posner (2002) might have meant when they wrote that “leadership is a performing art” (p. 84).

Dance. There are scholarly works that are especially helpful in understanding the merits of using dance as a metaphor for understanding and enhancing leadership. These approaches enable us to see nuances and subtle dynamics entailed in leadership that are often not visible without the lens of a dancer.

The first work we will consider is written by two Finish management scholars, Arja Ropo and Erika Sauer (2008), who have sought to use the aesthetic approach to better understand the connection between academic leadership theory and practical action. Using two different dance forms--the ballroom waltz (a traditional dance) and raves (a postmodern form of dance)--they illustrated the concept of corporeal leadership: a new, aesthetic paradigm of leadership that pays attention to bodily aspects of social interaction among people in the workplace and emphasizes a leader’s bodily presence and aesthetic

impact. In comparing leadership as a waltz to leadership as ecstatic raves, these authors highlighted the difference between a “more structured, positivistic, hierarchical, rational, formal approach to leadership” (p. 563) versus a “more emotional, constructionist, agile, free-flowing, organic approach to leadership” (p. 565-566).

Looking at the waltz alone, the authors described a good waltz dancer as one who needs to know and follow many rules, which they say is similar to traditional understandings of leadership that espouse the importance of developing a certain set of leadership traits and skills. These analogies make even more sense when we consider that the waltz, becoming popular during the industrial era, formulated a mechanistic role for the dancers where the partners “are like parts of a well-oiled machine...producing a predesigned dance” (Ropo & Sauer, 2008, p. 564). Another fascinating perspective that these authors, both of whom are women, provided is the male dominant orientation of waltz dancing. where “the woman’s task is to follow the steps of the [man] as gracefully and closely as possible” (p. 565).

Using dimensions of dance such as gaze, rhythm, and space, the Ropo and Sauer (2008) provided a new language and thus a new lens by which to understand leadership. For instance, talking about leadership in this kind of aesthetic way enables us to see whether the leader is the central figure in setting the rhythm and tempo in an organization or whether the leader no longer sets the rhythm but is able to make sense of and moved by” the different rhythms of others” (p. 568).

The second work relating leadership to dance is a research-based book by scholars from the School of Public Affairs at Arizona State University: Robert Denhardt and Janet Denhardt (2006). For their book, *The Dance of Leadership*, they began by interviewing

31 artists, especially dancers and choreographers, to learn about the arts. Their findings from these interviews showed the importance of space, time, and energy in shaping the human experience, the varying rhythms of human interaction, the role of images and symbols in communicating human emotions, improvising with creativity and spontaneity, and the importance of focus, passion and discipline. Next, the authors interviewed 26 leaders in business, government, non-profit organizations, the military, higher education, and the sports world to learn how the ideas they gleaned from the artists might apply in the actual world of leaders. They found that thinking from this artistic perspective provided new insights into what leaders do. Drawing insights from their research, the authors developed a perspective similar to transformative leadership, describing the essence of leadership as its

capacity to ‘energize,’ for the leader to touch and to move people, to animate them in pursuit of a better future, one in which problems are solved, one in which progress toward important goals is made, and one in which the human condition is improved. (p. 17)

An interesting parallel is drawn between how dancers and leaders use the elements of time, space, and energy. In seeking to establish an emotional connection with others, dancers work with these elements in their field: time being the sequence and duration of events, space being their relation to one another, and energy being the motive force that provides the spark of power and imagination, creativity and spontaneity that causes people to respond (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2008). Similarly, a leader works with these elements in organizing the flow of energy through time and space. Similar parallels are drawn with regard to working with the rhythms of human interaction, using images, symbols and metaphors to communicate, and spontaneously and creatively improvise. Another important parallel between leadership and dance is that both arts occur in the

moment. Unlike many other arts they do not produce finished products that we can revisit. The product of effective leaders and dancers is both momentary and fleeting. And thus making it imperative for leaders and dancers to be extremely disciplined and focused on staying fully present. Finally, the authors show how both leadership and dance are about meaning-making. This requires both leaders and dancers to draw on deep inner resources to connect the significance of what is being undertaken with both the context of their audiences and their own personal intent (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2008).

The final work we will consider pertains to how the metaphor of dance can provide insights into the dynamics involved in collective learning, specifically when using dialogic methodologies. In authoring the article, “Unfolding the Dance of Team Learning”, Andre Rowe (2008) from The Business School at Manchester Metropolitan University, applied a metaphorical framework involving dance to develop an alternative sociocultural view of collective learning.

Rove drew on insights from dance theory, especially concerning how dance always tells stories, “as participants play out sequences that express ideas and emotions, drawing responses from other dancers and the interpretations of the audience” (p. 49). He likened this to the continual construction of meaning in collective learning. Diverse stories emerge and fold into the moment-by-moment construction of new meanings and shared understandings among a team or group.

Music. Music-making is another aesthetic medium that has been used to provide understandings into artistic leadership. Music-making takes on many forms ranging from an individual playing an instrument to jazz ensemble to orchestra. In this section we will examine the work of several theorists who have made important contributions to the field

of aesthetic leadership by gleaning insights from both the metaphoric and actual uses of music, as well as collective music-making.

Author, seminar leader, concert pianist, and leadership theorist, Michael Jones, uses the medium of music-making, specifically piano-playing, to explore artful leadership (Jones, 2006, 2010, 2011). In a recent article (2010), he described his experience co-facilitating a group of over 100 leaders from diverse sectors of the economy while he played improvised piano. Here Jones described how aesthetics fostered generative conversations:

as the day unfolded many noticed that the pace of their speech slowed, there was more space between the sentences, their listening seemed more focused, they frequently paused to find just the right word, and there was almost a lyrical song-like quality in the way they spoke.” (p.3)

Perhaps what Jones noticed is what musical theorists talk about in suggesting that music has the power to shift our consciousness into a more imaginative and intelligent state (Campbell, 2001; Jourdain, 1997; Masters, 2006; Sacks, 2007). This seems to match Jones’ experience when he said that “everything seemed more vital, animate and alive, their voices resonating with a generative force as they reached across their differences and connected with a unifying force” (2010, p. 3). It is working with this new space, being able to create an integrative, spacious field, that the ‘personal and social artistry of leadership’ entails (Jones, 2006). A space that Jones calls *the commons*--a subtle, creative, subjective world that forms in the space between us--is where the opportunity lies for leaders with a high aesthetic aptitude to engage and participate.

Another work that draws upon musical aesthetics was produced by management scholars Ralph Bathurst, Brad Jackson, and Matt Statler (2010). In their article, “Leading Aesthetically in Uncertain Times,” they provided a deep philosophical and practical

exploration of how aesthetically competent leaders use sense perceptions to motivate and inspire. They began by developing a theory of aesthetic leadership informed by the musical aesthetics of Polish philosopher/phenomenologist Roman Ingarden. Bathurst et al. suggested that as musical awareness necessitates experiencing the temporal phenomenon of music as it happens in real time and space, so too does leadership require leaders to fully engage in events as they occur. They go on to say the temporality of music mirrors the dynamic state of continual transformation in human and organizational life.

Bathurst et al. (2010) also discussed how Ingarden's four elements of aesthetic theory (presencing and concretization, backward reflexivity, form and content, and myth-making) apply to a concept of aesthetically aware leadership. The authors applied their theoretical model of aesthetically-aware leadership to a case involving the response to Hurricane Katrina. They specifically examined how the awareness of aesthetic dimensions of experience might have enabled federal, state, and city leaders to act in a more timely and better coordinated manner. Their findings reveal that a more artful response to Katrina might have avoided the disastrous consequences of the flawed leadership witnessed by the world during this crisis. Specifically, aesthetic competencies such as empathic attunement, the ability to negotiate tensions between form and content, and use of insights from past experiences to anticipate future directions might have assisted leaders in better dealing with the chaos, complexity and uncertainty in the aftermath of Katrina.

Another form of music-making that has played a relevant role in constructing ideas about aesthetic leadership is jazz. Earlier in this proposal we discussed how Max DePree (1989) was an early leader in the field of leadership as artistry. In his book, *Leadership as Jazz* (1992), DePree drew upon his experience as the CEO of Hermann Miller and on his love of jazz to describe similarities between the fields of jazz and leadership. He wrote about how both “combine the unpredictability of the future with the gifts of individuals (p. 9).” He suggested that organizational leaders have much to learn from leaders of jazz bands. As in a jazz band, the leader becomes fully integrated into the performance, playing along with others and giving focus to the spirit and energy of the group.

Earlier in this paper we also discussed how jazz ensembles can provide a model for leaders to cultivate intelligent collective improvisation (Barrett, 1998, 2000). This concept is also used by Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaeufer (2010) to explain how perception that enables us to listen simultaneously to our own contribution while also listening to the whole as jazz musicians do.

Another musical metaphor used to add perspective to the artistry of leadership is the symphony or orchestra. Like jazz bands, the metaphor of an orchestra or symphony may be especially relevant to the artistry of organizational leadership since these art mediums involve a group of people working to achieve something together. Often times these metaphors relate to the conductor as the leader, but as we shall soon see there are also perspectives of self-organization or distributed/shared leadership where the ensemble is not reliant on a single leader.

Peter Hanke (2004), a professor at the Copenhagen Business School is also an orchestra conductor who has used this metaphor to illuminate aspects of leadership as artistry. His course/workshop offered at the Copenhagen Business School and in-house at various European companies is titled “Leadership as a Performing Art.” Using musical techniques, his workshop draws from the listening and sensing capabilities that the orchestra conductor uses to build an emotional, musical expression. Unfortunately the only academic book Hanke published is in Dutch, so we cannot probe further into his results and findings.

Ann Sofie Köping (2007), a Swedish professor, uses symphonic music-making as a model for presenting insights into aesthetic leadership. Based upon an ethnographic study she conducted in 2003 of everyday life in a concert hall, Köping focuses on the collective interplay that occurs in producing beautiful music. Taking a relational perspective informed by Mary Parker Follett’s (1924) concept of the circular response, Köping described how mutual dependence and adaptation are strong characteristics in the creative process at work between the orchestra and the conductor. Rather than viewing the conductor as a person who possesses certain traits or knowledge (like the power to influence others), as an individualistic perspective might suggest, Köping used the relational perspective to describe leadership as a process of constant negotiation to achieve collaborative artistry. This relational perspective highlights the social aspect of organizations and thus of organizational leadership as underscored by Köping’s statement that “the process of creativity is a process of social interaction and social expectations, not the product of a number of great ideas and skills added together in a ‘creative way’” (p. 29).

Building upon this relational notion are Harvey Seifert, the executive director of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and his co-author Peter Economy (2001). The more than 30-year-old 27 member Orpheus is a Grammy-award winning orchestra that operates without a conductor. As such, it has been held up as a model of collaborative leadership and now regularly partners with business organizations to impart its wisdom about collaboration and collective leadership. Orpheus has identified eight core principles that enable its members to share responsibility for leadership and “for their disagreements and differences to be sources of creativity rather than something that should be suppressed in the interest of uniformity and social harmony” (from forward by Richard Hackman, as cited in Seifert & Economy, 2001, p. xiv).

While the Orpheus orchestra does not have a conductor, it does have many leaders since formal leadership roles are constantly rotated among individual musicians. This results in a wide distribution of power and decision-making “unleashing a great deal of energy onstage and behind the scenes” (Seifert & Economy, 2001, p. 15). In addition to sharing leadership, the Seifert and Economy (2001) shared that the orchestra intentionally and actively fosters horizontal teamwork, encourages individual responsibility, clearly defines roles, requires open channels of communication, seeks consensus, and has a mission that is determined (and constantly refined) by the members themselves thus one that they are passionately dedicated to. As these authors explained in their book, these core principles distinguish themselves from other orchestras and symphonies, which tend to be exemplars of the most hierarchical, dictatorial type organization, while Orpheus exemplifies how the use of democratic leadership principles can create a successful, long-lasting organization that its members love being a part of.

Drama/Theater. Usage of the theatrical and dramatic aspects of the performing arts is perhaps the most widely studied view of aesthetic leadership. With a high degree of emphasis on using the self as the instrument with which one engages with the world, the kinesthetic and embodiment aspects of leadership become especially pronounced through theater and drama.

Since Pine & Gilmore's (1999) celebrated usage of the theater metaphor to define business and organizations in introducing the concept of the *Experience Economy*, there has been a proliferation of dramatic metaphors to describe leadership (Austin & Devin, 2003; Biehl-Missal, 2010; Halpern & Lubar, 2003; Hatch et al., 2005; Ibbotson, 2008; Ibbotson & Darso, 2008; Mucha, 2009; Sauer & Ropo, 2007; Sinha, 2010; Thomson, 2010).

Given that theater is basically stories that are dramatized, it makes sense for us to begin our review of theorists linking leadership and theater with the work of Hatch et al. (2005). In the section above on storytelling, we described how Hatch, Kostera, and Kozminski (2005) applied a storytelling lens to understand leadership when they analyzed CEO interviews from HBR. These same authors also use drama to reveal the artistry displayed by these same CEOs.

For their analysis, Hatch et al. (2005) first identified the elements involved in producing theatrical productions. These elements included: "act/action (what was done), scene (when or where was it done), agent (who did it), agency (how was it done), purpose (why was it done), audience (those who watch the performance), casting (who plays the parts), and directing (the bringing of it all together)" (p. 48-49). The authors then go on to describe four different types of theater: "the morality play, which is built around values

and ideals; modern drama, the essence of which involves intrigue and ambiguity; a happening, which are plays structured in unconventional ways and often rely upon improvisation; and the global show, which is about universality in that it contains the other three types and often uses elaborate high-tech staging that requires extensive behind-the-scenes professional support”(p. 50-51).

After sorting out all the elements and types of theaters, Hatch et al. (2005) overlayed this framework onto the CEO interviews to better understand the complex web of relationships among dramatic elements used by successful organizational leaders. They found that the CEOs tended to have a range of being able use various types of theater: Each CEO interviewed provided evidence of at least two of the types.

Another perspective about leadership and the dramatic arts comes from Piers Ibbotson, a respected scholar, author, leadership coach/consultant, and former theatrical performer and director. In his book, *The Illusion of Leadership: Directing Creativity in the Arts and Business* (2008), he explored what the collaborative arts have to teach leaders about working with the paradoxical forces “creativity and constraint, serendipity and intention” (p. 3). The trick to doing this, suggested Ibbotson, is to understand that leadership “is not a science, but an art...in the sense that it needs to be practiced with the full self: with heart, mind and soul aligned (p. 3).” One of the things the author proposes is the use of the theater director as a model for leadership. Describing how directing a play is a creative process where the director’s artistic medium is a group of people, he suggests this as an analogy for organizational leadership.

Ibbotson (2008) came to the conclusion that leadership is really a co-created process. This man has a wonderful philosophy undergirding his thinking. He believes that

all life (including business life and organizational life) is unfinished...that is, it is “constantly evolving and emerging” (p. 130). An artistic mindset understands life’s dynamic, transitional essence and therefore engages differently with the world than a mindset that sees the world in a more static way. Organizational leaders with an artistic mindset will approach their world in a way that allows creativity, emergence, and evolution to happen, but giving it direction and shape. They will understand that all they do and accomplish is truly co-created with others and with life’s evolutionary forces (Ibbotson).

Another pair of scholar-practitioners who speak to the importance of emergence as a key aspect of understanding leadership through the theatrical lens are Rob Austin and Lee Devin (2003). As part of their collaborations, Austin, a Harvard Business School professor, and Devin, a theater director and playwright, co-authored *Artful-Making: What Managers Need to Know About How Artists Work*, a research-based book that draws from their collaborative experiences. They argued that the artistry used by the collaborative artist is becoming increasingly important in a world where knowledge and ideas are the primary components and assets of business organizations. A world where “the need to innovate, to make mid-course corrections, and to adapt to changing conditions are the main features of a growing part of daily work (p. xxiii).” Contrasting artful-making approaches to management and leadership versus industrial-making approaches to management and leadership is a process they describe as “creating form out of disorganized materials” (p. xxv.), which is especially effective for knowledge work. These authors identify four qualities of artful-making: release, collaboration, ensemble, and play. They go on to explain how these interdependent qualities work to create a new

frame for understanding complex processes at work in the artful aspects of business, of creating ideas, solutions, products, services, etc without a blueprint.

From this perspective, leadership might be seen as analogous to a participatory way of directing a play as described by Abigail Adams, the Artistic Director for the People's Light and Theater Company:

My directing style is based on what the actors are bringing to rehearsal, and on making what you make out of those particular actors then and there. You discover the play throughout the process. I never really have an idea about what I can do or can't do. As a director, I'm keeping the actors company, I'm helping to give them courage on their journey...I'm on the journey with them. If one actor makes a choice that makes the other actor's choices impossible, then I'm there to negotiate that. but usually we try a scene or a moment so many different ways that the right choice makes itself known. And everybody in the room knows what that right choice is. We work until we find that. (p. 19)

Dance, music and drama/theater are three examples of the aesthetic leadership embodied in the performing arts. There is an abundance of work that describes the close relationship between drama/theater as aesthetic leadership. The three studies described above are just samples of this work. There are numerous other studies and perspectives however it would be too redundant to discuss each in this proposal.

Visual arts. In an earlier section, when we were discussing various *levels of seeing*, I talked about how artists tend to notice and see things that non-artists tend to miss. This well-honed perception is sometimes referred to as observation process (Root-Bernstein, 1999) and is a capacity that several leadership scholars suggest is beneficial to leadership. According to these theorists, this capacity can be built by learning to draw, engaging with photography, or appreciating various visual arts (De Cantis, 1996; Merritt, 2010; Mitra et al., 2010; Schein, 2001).

Edgar Schein (2001), a well-known organizational and leadership theorist from the MIT Sloan School of Business and a lifetime sketcher, offered a personal point of view about the relationship between leadership and the visual arts. Suggesting that “art and artists stimulate us to see more, hear more, and experience more of what is going on within us and around us (p. 1),” he talked about how arts, particularly the visual arts, enable us to notice what we might otherwise miss. This perspective about how honing our sense of sight might enable us to see in newer, broader, more detailed ways also seems validated both from a philosophical perspective (Good, 2006) and from a neuroscientific perspective (Zeki, 1999).

Another perspective about leadership and the visual arts comes from Cheryl De Ciantis (1996). In describing the methods of people like Betty Edwards (1986, 1999), who teach people with no experience how to draw by engaging their right brains, de Ciantis described how by, engaging in artistic exercises, leaders in her workshops enlarged their perceptual universe. In learning to slow down and draw what they actually saw, instead of what they thought they saw, the executives who participated in this session learned not to let their expectations mislead them. This resulted in widened perceptual lenses that opened up spaces where new views became apparent and new opportunities arose for creating shared meaning.

A final perspective we will review for this proposal consists of how the art viewing experience relates to leadership. For instance, Swedish management scholar, Katja Linqvist (2007), looked at the role of the curator in designing exhibition experiences for museum viewers. Likening the dynamics the curator needs to take into consideration to those that organizational leaders have to deal with, she used the metaphor of Eros and

Apollo in a pas-de-deux, a mutual dance. The role of the leader as artist/curator entails enabling the two forces to perform a joint dance - one where Eros (representing creativity) and Apollo (representing clarity) can engage together to produce successful enterprises. This said, there is a recognition that while incorporating both imagination and realization are needed, "the task of management [/leadership] is to offer the best conditions possible for the realization of a project, cherishing imagination at its core" (p. 207). In metaphoric terms

Aesthetic enterprises are like parties where Eros is the honorary guest and Apollo the host. Apollo is needed for the party to happen, for everything to be taken care of. He simultaneously serves and supervises. Eros secures the spirit of the party and Apollo secures its actual happening. (p. 206)

Another perspective on art viewing comes from scholars Anu Mitra, Yen Hsieh, and Ted Buswick (2010), this time from the perspective of the viewer instead of the one creating the viewing experience. These authors proposed that an important aspect of the leader's capacities is the "ability to read his or her environment in order to come up with workable solutions"; yet, "compared to verbal, analytical, and logic-based education, the skills of observation and perception have been widely overlooked in the preparation of American business students" (p. 77). In drawing from research based on nine years of collaborative endeavors between museums and non-art degree university programs and corporate leadership programs, they suggested that strategies drawn from the visual arts can build "intentional observation" skills(p. 77) -- the ability to consciously apply a thinking strategy when looking at a new situation requiring analysis. These programs focused on teaching participants intentional observation by looking at art in museums. Unlike more conventional ways of looking, participants learned how to look with intentionality, which in turn led to more reflection what they saw. This way of looking

produced new and refreshing perspectives that were unavailable to the old way of looking.

Mitra et al. (2010) also pointed to an interesting connection we talked about earlier in this paper, in the section on storytelling: about different type of thinking and logic. The authors suggest that like storytelling, intentional observation has cognitive implications. Intentional observation tends to result in abductive thinking. Whereas initial seeing tends to produce inductive (fact-based) thinking and slightly more focused seeing produces deductive (judgement-based) thinking, deeper observation reveals a more holistic view and produces abductive thinking, which in turn “creates the groundwork for possibilities thinking” (p. 81).

Arts-based leadership development. Arts-based learning in business is a field that seems to be growing quite rapidly due to the recognition that artistic knowledge and insight benefit the increasing demand for creativity, innovation, collaboration, and so forth, in organizations (Bartelme, 2005; Boyle & Ottensmeyer, 2005; Darso, 2004/2009; de Ciantis, 1996; Palus & Horth, 1996; VanGundy & Naiman, 2007). As laid forth by Daniel Pink in his 2004 The New York Times article, “The MFA is Becoming the New MBA,” he explained how corporate recruiters were turning increasingly to art schools over business schools in search of artistic aptitude. Concurrent with this trend is a proliferation of organizations, many of which are affiliated with academic institutions, that are engaged in researching and advancing the use of artful approaches to enhance organizational and societal change. Some of these organizations include:

- *The Creative Alliance.* This research consortium at the Danish School of Education seeks to accentuate the interplay between arts and business. (Darso, 2004/2009).

- *The Banff Centre.* This 50-year old continuing education institution (originally founded by the University of Alberta, Canada) offers many programs that use artistic methods such as dance, drama, film, photography, theater, voice, literary and visual arts, etc, as educational tools for developing leadership competencies. They believe that art-based approaches are the best way to build the leadership needed in today's world of ambiguity and complexity; leadership which requires capacities such as “aesthetic judgment, a perceptual stance and an ability to create plausible narratives of the world” (Woodward & Funk, 2010, p. 1).
- *The IEDC-Bled School of Management.* This small business school in Slovenia is considered a pioneer in developing creative leaders. Their teaching philosophy embraces engagement with the arts as a way to “stimulate novel thoughts and ideas, challenge our beliefs and assumptions, and connect us with the social and material worlds around us in profound ways” (Purg & Sutherland, 2010, p. 2).
- *The Center for Art and Leadership (CAL) at the Copenhagen Business School.* This organization conducts research and organizes international collaborative networks of researchers, organizations, and artists related to the connection between art and leadership. Additional collaboration is fostered with other universities and business schools as well as art firms and art ensembles, all with the intent of learning more about how art, as a special activity that uses aesthetics, generates knowledge valuable for business purposes. (Adler, 2007; de Monthoux, 2007)
- *Arts and Business Council.* This division of Americans for the Arts aims to create closer ties between business and the arts. As part of its mission this organization offers arts-based corporate training to increase the value proposition of the arts

and help build environments in which the arts and arts education thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.

- *Rotman School of Management.* This business school, at the University of Toronto, is trying to reinvent the MBA for the creative economy. As part of their quest for developing greater innovative capacities among business leaders the school appropriates principles from the artistic design process to foster *design thinking* and *integrative thinking* among its students (Martin, 2007, 2009).
- *Arteconomy vzw.* This Belgian non-profit organization's goal is to create greater awareness about the valuable relationship between art and economics. As a think tank and research lab, they bring together artists and companies for workshops, training, etc. with the intent to demonstrate how employees are not just 'human resources' but rather need to be seen as 'creative resources.' (Broeck, Cools, & Maenhout, 2008).
- *Center for Creative Learning at the Queensland University of Technology.* This Australian organization offers an arts-based management and leadership education program called *Management Jazz*. A three-year study of this program has shown that as a result of observing and creating art, participants experienced enhanced intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. Specifically, they developed enhanced creative capabilities such as self-awareness, emotional intelligence, curiosity, patience, reflection, risk-taking, improved group interaction, and the ability to move from familiarity to situational ambiguity. The findings also indicated that participants found their learnings and learning process relevant to application in the workplace. (Kerr & Lloyd, 2008).

Conclusion and Next Steps

In conclusion, a review of the literature on the topic of imaginative leadership suggests that having aesthetic sensibilities and fostering them in the community which one leads have much relevance to organizational leadership. We have seen enough to establish a theoretical framework that suggests great potential in studying the connection between leaders who have aesthetic sensibilities and their effectiveness at leading organizations. The purpose of this dissertation is to further explore this connection.

Research on the topic of imaginative leadership is growing rapidly; however, it is still a relatively young field that can benefit from additional research. While a fair amount of research looking at the practical applications of arts and aesthetics in leadership exist, I believe the field can benefit from the type of study proposed in this dissertation. At a minimum, this dissertation will build-on and compliment the wonderful work that has already been done. The research will add to the field by exploring how artistic sensibilities (as perceived through the attunement/engagement framework) might impact an organizational leader's engagement with the organization it is leading. A study like the one proposed here, where a group of organizational leaders representing a variety of organizations and industries are interviewed, does not seem to exist in the field.

The study that comes closest to what is proposed here was conducted by Lotte Darso (2004/2009). In 2002-2003 she interviewed 53 artists, business people, and theorists/scholars to explore what business can learn from the arts. Another similar endeavor, albeit one with only one interview participant, was an interview conducted by two academics from the Management School at Clark University. The interview was conducted with James Hill, CEO of Unilever Ice Cream and Frozen Food and a board

member of the Royal National Theater. The authors wanted to learn about Hill's experience in drawing upon the arts to implement strategic change (Boyle & Ottensmeyer, 2005).

The field also gained from a study of two successful entrepreneurs, examining how they used their arts experience to lead their own businesses (Daum, 2005). The study questioned whether having an arts background would provide distinct advantages to entrepreneurs (people who build a start-up or manage a fast-growth company) by providing them with tactical, operational advantages. Another example is a survey conducted by Kevin Daum, a successful entrepreneur and CEO of an Inc 500 company. Daum, a theatre graduate, surveyed several chapters of the Young Entrepreneurs' Organization and found 15% of the members surveyed had training in the arts or a hands-on artistic track record (2005).

While the studies cited above added to the topic of imaginative leadership, we do not believe they provided insights into the connection between a leader's artistic sensibilities and the leader's engagement with the organization it is leading. Given the evolution of consciousness and environment in the organizational world during the past eight years, and given my specific focus on interviewing only organizational leaders, I believe this study will make a unique and valuable contribution.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study examined the question: *How might one's artistic sensibilities enhance their leadership effectiveness?* Exploring this question required the exploration of several additional sub-questions:

1. What is (are) our participants' experience(s) of artistry and in what ways has this experience spilled over to inform their approach to leadership?
2. What are specific leadership situations our participants encountered where they drew on their artistic sensibilities?
3. What do participants do more effectively as a result of using their artistic sensibilities?
4. What aspects of our participants' artistic sensitivities have been used most and been most beneficial to their leadership capacities?

With these questions in mind, we begin this chapter by describing our method to gather data, choose a participant group, and discuss the researcher's role and lens for bringing coherence to the data. We end with a discussion of key terms, procedures for conducting the interviews, the interview schedule, and approach for analyzing the data.

Choice of Method

The primary objective of this qualitative research project was to craft an initial description of leadership informed by artistic sensibilities. We achieved this objective by eliciting from participants their experience of how artistic sensibilities influenced their internal processes and impacted their role as a leader. Specifically, we sought to gain greater insight into how the qualities of attunement and expression, qualities normally associated with artistry, revealed themselves in the day-to-day operational life of

someone engaged in organizational leadership. We wanted to learn how these aesthetic sensibilities shaped participants' thinking, interactions, the way they related to their world, their attitude, and their approach to work situations

There were several issues to resolve in choosing an interview method that mirrored the intent of a research inquiry exploring artistic sensibilities with leadership. First, we needed to ensure that this work was reflective of both artistic considerations and rigorous inquiry. Second, we needed to identify a method that enabled us to capture the nuanced experience and layered stories the interview participants were likely to relate. Third, we had to create the conditions for a conversation in which participants could make conscious their unconscious processes that may not initially be in their awareness. Fourth, we wanted to create a safe relational space of trust and intimacy where the participant felt comfortable engaging in deep personal sharing. And finally, it was important to establish a mutual, collaborative relationship with the participant that enabled us to work as partners to produce useful material. By addressing these issues, we had a better chance of generating knowledge, either during the interview itself or following it (through reflection on the conversation), that contributed to our deeper understanding of the questions and contributed to a fresh perspective of leadership and its connection with artistry.

The chosen interview methodology needed to augment the exploratory nature of this research project and the shared influence between researcher and participant in creating meaning and coherent description. The nature of the interviewing methodology also needed to align with the aesthetic considerations that posit artistic sensibility as a critical element of this inquiry.

To resolve the issues above we used an open-ended in-depth interview approach. Kvale (1996) described research interviews as a conversational genre with a structure and a purpose. The interviewer and participant are considered partners interacting together to obtain knowledge. Kvale's use of two metaphors (the miner and the traveler) provided a useful framework for explaining my role as the interviewer. The miner metaphor describes the interviewer's role as digging up buried knowledge; whereas, the traveler metaphor describes that interviewer as one who wanders together with, in conversation with, the participants (1996). Knowledge is formed through an inter-relational process and is constructed through a dialogic, creative process between the interviewer and interviewee. In our study, as is true in many like-studies, we did not seek pat answers from participants. We asked them to reflect on ideas they probably had not thought of before, to look at connections between things they had not considered before. Thus they learned as the conversation progressed. Thoughts and ideas emerged from the participants that they did not anticipate.

In describing the qualitative research interview as a construction site of knowledge, Kvale (1996) described five interrelated features of the type of knowledge generated in these interviews: "(1) knowledge as conversational, (2) knowledge as narrative, (3) knowledge as language, (4) knowledge as context, and (5) knowledge as interrelational" (p. 42-44). Given the collaborative and multidimensional nature of its output, using the qualitative interview enabled us to obtain the rich knowledge needed to aid our exploration of the research question.

Use of open-ended interviewing also enables us to access aesthetic modes of knowing (Eisner, 2008) among our participants. Our intention was to evoke and gather

stories from participants that had personal and emotional significance for them. In their article, Eisner & Powell (2002) used the term *artistic modes of thought* to refer to one's experience that informs decision-making in work situations:

a sense that this choice is better than that one, that this fit is better than another, makes decisions possible that cannot be made by appealing to rules of logic or to the probabilities secured through inferential processes. (p. 35)

The open-ended questions that guide our interview conversation (see interview schedule later in the section) are geared to elicit information about our participants' artistic and aesthetic experiences in their leadership work. These are "forms of experience that possess an emotional quality that is both feelingful and satisfying" (Eisner & Powell, 2002, p. 135).

Appreciative inquiry is a methodology that works in a similar way, using open-ended interviews in its quest to facilitate the power of exploration and association of meaning to lived experience (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Zandee, 2008; Nissley, 2002). We have used the underlying girds of this methodology, which entailed asking questions that sought out the positive (what works, what energizes and feels good, what's been successful, etc.) to construct our interview questions.

Participants

Interview participants needed to meet two requirements. The first requirement entailed holding (or having held) an organizational leadership role. The second requirement was having artistic sensibility as defined by current or past involvement in an endeavor that called upon deep sensory experience. Evidence of their artistic sensibilities was demonstrated by criteria that included: a personal practice with artistic

mediums (e.g., photography, painting, dance, music) or a disciplined inquiry into an area of aesthetics (e.g. art collector, art critic, degree in art studies, curator, etc.).

The research interviewed eight participants. They were identified through personal contacts and recommendations from individuals working in the field, such as colleagues, clients, fellow students, and dissertation committee members. The researcher had a wide network of executive coaches and facilitators who worked with organizational leaders. Many people in this network were able to refer qualified interview candidates. Participation in the study was completely voluntary.

Prior to the official interview, each participant was pre-qualified via a 20-30 minute phone conversation. The intent of this conversation was to explain the topic of the study and to determine if the potential participant met the criteria required for being a participant: specifically of having demonstrable artistic sensibilities (by serious involvement with an arts-based activity) and current or past experience in organizational leadership.

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher of this study, I was a primary instrument for analysis as well as a co-participant in the interview conversations. Although I collected data through interviews, as is recognized in artistic approaches to research, “the major source of data emanates from how the investigator experiences what she attends to” (Eisner, 1981/2005 p. 73).

As the daughter of an artist (my mother) and the mother of an eight-year old child (my daughter), I bring a certain appreciation of the qualities associated with artists, children, and the feminine. As the founder/owner of an organization consulting business,

a former investment banker, and an executive coach to leaders at Fortune 1000 type organizations, I bring an understanding and appreciation of the values of enterprise and the development of leaders within this context. As a doctoral candidate, graduate of academically accredited certificate programs in socially-engaged spirituality and expressive arts, and as a former student at a theological seminary, I bring intellectual, humanistic, and imaginative curiosity. As an animal lover, avid yoga practitioner, and nature hiker, I respect the wisdom of the body and the more-than-human world. Finally, as a loyal friend and spouse and active participant in numerous community groups and professional networks, I value the relational and social dimension of organizing and change. These experiences and perspectives assisted me in being open, participative and empathetic during the research process: qualities that renown philosopher Martin Buber (1958) described as essential in gaining real knowledge of another person when he stated that the I-Thou relationship involves “real encounter and genuine mutuality” (p. 50; Creswell, 1998, p. 274). During the interview I held a metaphorical *container* where I fully attended to my participants by asking questions that invited their stories while deeply listening and witnessing their expression and presence. During the analysis phase, I engaged deeply, intuitively, and imaginatively with the living texts (while bracketing off my personal assumptions and bias) to sense the mysteries they wished to reveal.

Definition of Terms

The definitions/constructs that were used for this study:

Artistic sensibilities –Artistic sensibilities entail capacities of heightened awareness and engagement derived from love, connection, curiosity, and care. These capacities tend to be associated with the right brain. Artistic sensibilities have to do with our ability to

see with new eyes. They involve a shift in our inner environment that enables us to see our outer environment differently. This shift entails having an enhanced inner experience from which flows expanded perception and expression. It has to do with the inner dimension, the implicate, from which the explicate unfolds (Bohm, 1980, 1996).

Organizational leadership – Organizational leadership is the ability to generate coordinated action that manifests in positive outcomes for all stakeholders. Being an organizational leader requires that one be engaged in acts of leadership within an organization. Examples of organizational leadership include leading a team, group, initiative, or some kind of organizational endeavor.

Deconstructing these metaphoric terms provides further clarity. Below is a deconstruction of artistic sensibilities separated into *artistic* and *sensibility*; and organizational leadership separated into *organizational* and *leadership*:

Artistic sensibilities.

Artistic. For our purposes, artistic has to do with *artistry*. Artistry is an integrated form of consciousness that enables us to experience the world and ourselves as part of the world more fully. It draws together the mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional realms of personhood. Artistry involves sensitivity and courage that increases our capacity to understand and act.

Artistry also involves a deep connection to ourselves, to one another, and to the world around us. It requires intimacy, which in turn leads to trusting our own instincts and sensing right action.

At its core, the artistic perspective is a state of mind that enables us to have aesthetic experiences, become transformed, and then be or do something to portray that

transformation. Among other things, this process requires us to slow down and shift out of our analytic minds long enough to notice more of what's going on in the moment both within us and around us, and to fully engage with this phenomenon. The artistic perspective is a participatory orientation that involves being fully available to co-create with life.

Elliott Eisner, professor of art and education at Stanford University and also a former artist (painter) himself, provided a poetic description of artistry: "Artistry courts surprise, it plays at the edge of possibility, it trades in ambiguities, it addresses dilemmas, and it provides a certain kind of delight, if one can take the risks" (2005, p.1).

Artistry entails three iterative components: connection, experiencing, and expressing. Connection entails a certain stickiness, closeness between, and recognition of relatedness between things. The artistic process starts with a connection between ourselves and the world around us: enabling us to see reality more clearly. This first step is about tuning in and getting in touch. In a sense it is about getting a more close up view. It requires us to be in a somewhat loosened and permeable state. It is only after we establish this connection that we are prepared to fully experience our subject.

Experiencing occurs in a non-intellectual way where we directly take in and relate to a subject. When we truly experience something, rather than have an intellectual understanding of it, we live it directly. Through this way of experiencing our subject we can then authentically express ourselves and our interpretation of the subject.

In expressing, the final step of the artistic process, we operate from a transformed place, where we have become moved and changed by our experience of a subject and where we then express our new self. This expression results in the creation of something

new that comes through us. The self becomes an instrument, a vessel, of creation.

Sensibility. Sensibility is about consciousness, perception and responsiveness. It is related to senses, sensations, and sensitiveness. It is the ability to be alert and aware and to sense and make sense of, the world around us. It further entails responsiveness to sensory stimuli, which often shows up as the aesthetic or emotional.

Organizational leadership.

Organizational. For our purposes, this term entails the organizing of people toward some end. It can include the structural and/or informal dynamics related to a group of people associating together. It often involves attention to the forming of independent and disparate players or parts into a coordinated and harmonious whole in pursuit of united action.

Leadership. Leadership is the ability to lead collective groups of people around a common cause. It is the ability to exude a sense of competence that instills in people the belief that the leader will help move the collective in a positive direction. It is the power to see clearly, connect with others, and have the courage to speak and act from an inner source of guidance.

Procedures

Prior to the interview I contacted every participant electronically to remind them about the topic and confirm our session. In this email, I also included the consent form to read and write down any questions or concerns. Before the interview began, participants were asked to share their questions and/or concerns. When all questions and concerns were answered to the participant's satisfaction the participant was asked to sign the consent form. I told each participant they could have access to the audiotape or

transcription of the interview and the findings of the study. Six interviews were conducted in-person: one by telephone and one via Skype. The interview sessions lasted 90 - 120 minutes and were conducted in a private, uninterrupted venue such as the participant's conference room at their workplace, their home at a time when distractions would not occur, or in my office. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Additionally, during the interview, I made written notes of participants' gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, and other non-verbal information that conveyed tacit information. As appropriate, during the interview conversation, I mentioned my observations about the participant's body language and tone to learn what other insights this might elicit for them. I also made written notes about what participants said, so I could use their own words in formulating follow-up questions.

At the end of the interview, I invited participants to inform me about new revelations that might emerge about this topic in the following week. I reiterated this invitation in a follow-up *thank you* email the day after the interview. One week after the interview I checked-in again by email and again asked if any new revelations had occurred. On the occasion where new revelations did occur, I asked participants to either email me their thoughts or, if they were available for a telephone conversation, we could arrange to speak live.

After the interview, I made additional notes about my experience during the interview. Through this process, it was possible to pick up additional intuitive information that was not explicitly articulated in the interview. Being careful not to project or impose my perceptions, but nonetheless valuing my experience as a valid possible source of important information, I cross-referenced with the audio-recordings

and transcripts to determine where matches revealed deeper insights.

Finally, I kept a separate journal where I wrote my personal reflections on the material discussed during interviews. This enabled me to see my assumptions, bias, and prejudices. Later, during the analysis process I cross-referenced these journal writings with the data to ensure that I did not unduly influence the interpretations.

Interview Schedule

The interview format was semi-structured, constructed according to the phases described in the section below. Each phase of the interview was guided by certain intentions about eliciting different kinds of information. The clarity of intent for each phase utilized both pre-formed questions together with follow-up questions specific to a particular participant's responses. Thus the interviews were designed to include a combination of formal questions and a more dialogic flow, all the while seeking to maintain the structural integrity within each phase and throughout the interview.

The interview format utilized a phased approach consisting of five sections. Each phase or section varied in its intention to generate certain types of information. The sample questions at the end of each section were only samples and evolved during each interview conversation and with each pursuant interview with the other participants. I wanted the creative process to be alive and well during these conversations.

The phases were intentionally ordered to shift the participant into an aesthetic-orientation early in the interview. At the outset, I wanted to elicit a state of consciousness in my participants that is similar to a state of consciousness elicited by directly engaging with art-making. The process of scanning through memories of engaging with art-making, or art-appreciating, activates right brain intelligence. As they recalled and relived

their leadership experiences, during the pursuant conversation, they had access to an expanded repertoire of knowledge and information not usually available through our more dominant left brain perspective. (Brown, J.W., 1999; Edwards, 1999; Eisner, 2002; Ferre, 2008; Hogan, 2003; Knowles & Cole, 2008; McNiff, 1998; Ramachandran & Hirstein, 1999; N. Rogers, 1993; Turner, M., 2006; Uhrmacher & Matthews, 2005; Zeki, 1999).

First phase of the interview. This phase of the interview gathered background data and was guided by five intentions: (1) learn what the artistic activities are that the participant has seriously engaged in; (2) learn the participant's aesthetic experience when engaged with/in their artistic medium; (3) ask questions that elicit the participant's memory and lived experience of what happens to them when they are engaged in the aesthetic experience (e.g. making music, writing poetry, dancing, painting, etc.); (4) ask questions in a way that invites participants to remember and relive the experience in their mind's eye in as vivid (and visceral) a way as possible, and (5) have them explore how this experience relates to our understanding of attunement and expression.

Sample questions.

“Tell me about the artistic medium(s) you seriously engage in (or have engaged with).”

“What is it like when you [state their medium (e.g. paint, sing, play music, act, dance, etc.)]?” “Describe what it feels like to be engaged in this activity?”

“Describe specific instances when you felt a sense of complete immersion while engaged in your artwork...please describe what happened”

“During and shortly after engaging with [state participant’s art] what did you notice different about the way you were relating to the world around you?”

Second phase of the interview. This phase focused on gathering information about the participant’s organizational leadership experiences; Specifically, to learn about the participant’s leadership role/responsibilities/activities in the organization. I wanted to learn about the participant’s mental models/concept of a good leader. Finally, I want to get glimpses into the participant’s leadership style and approach to leadership.

Sample questions.

“Tell me about the leadership role you currently play?”

“Describe a particularly difficult leadership situation that you experienced (in your current or in a past role)? What was the situation? What was your response? What was the outcome?”

“What were some of the key decisions you had to make in this situation? How did you know when you were heading in the right direction?”

“Describe a time when, in a situation where you were acting in a leadership capacity, that entailed many diverse and competing views from diverse individuals or stakeholders.”

“How did you engage with this situation to integrate various interests and move toward unity and a common purpose?”

“Describe both what happened in terms of the external things going on as well as what was going on internally for you.”

“What would you consider as a really good day as far as leadership goes?”

“What aspect of leadership do you find most exciting?”

“What would you consider your greatest achievement as a leader?”

“How did you accomplish that?”

“What, if any, type of process or practice do you employ to prepare yourself when you encounter a difficult leadership situation?”

“Describe a situation where this happened?”

“As you look back on your ‘leadership career,’ how would you describe your growth and development as a leader?”

“As you look forward regarding your leadership aspirations, how do you want to grow to attain these aspirations?”

Third phase of the interview. My intention during this phase was to learn about the connection participants might see between their artistic sensibilities and their approach to organizational leadership. At the outset of this phase, I experimented with different tactics such as using stories, images, cartoons, for example, to evoke different perspectives.

Sample questions.

“What connections do you see between your artistic sensibilities and your approach to leadership?”

“Describe a situation that illuminates this connection.”

“Going back to the situation(s) you described before, how did you morph and shift to match the situation as it evolved?”

Fourth phase of the interview. This phase of the interview was intended to elicit information about how the participant views leadership. What led this person to engage in leadership responsibilities? What does this person enjoy about being a leader? How does this person measure his/her success as a leader? We want to understand these issues suspecting that they will shed light on the concept of leadership as artistry.

Sample questions.

*“What are some of the things that have drawn you to engage in being a leader?
How did you get into this?”*

“Which, if any, particular poems, images, musical scores etc has influenced you in terms of how you approach leadership? What was it about that piece that left a mark on you?”

“Now that we’ve had this opportunity to think about the connection between your artistic sensibilities and your leadership approach, what’s a metaphor that describes how you think about your approach to leadership?”

“In what ways might you think of leadership as a craft?”

Fifth phase of the interview. This final phase of the interview had two goals: first, to allow participants a chance to reflect on our 90 minute conversation and to perhaps discover additional pertinent information; second, to gain a perspective on future possibilities the participant envisioned for how artistic sensibilities can be put to greater use to enhance organizational leadership. I asked four closing questions:

“When you think about our conversation, is there something I haven’t asked you that you think is important? Is there anything additional you’d like to share about this exploration?”

“As you reflect back on our conversation, what have you discovered or been surprised by?”

“Given our discussion and the stories you’ve told, the approach you’ve begun to articulate...how does it give/create for you a sense of possibilities?”

“Leadership is often associated with hard choices, either/or, dealing with the limits of a situation, and that may be true, but how does this approach we’ve been discussing open up new possibilities for you?”

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were completed, I engaged in a variety of rigorous processes to interpret the data.

First, within 24 hours of completing each individual interview, I listened to the audio recording while reviewing my written notes. This was done in a quiet undisturbed setting in my home office. During this review and in a following 30 minute contemplative period, I let the information holistically seep into my conscious and unconscious mind and body.

In one case, I used voice-recognition software to create a written transcript. Due to the technological limitations of the software that can only read one voice, it was necessary to speak the interview into the transcription program. My original intent was to

transcribe each interview in this manner with the hope that this process would facilitate greater embodiment of the data. However, due to severe technological malfunctions, I had to abort this strategy after the first transcription and sent the interviews out to be professionally transcribed. Upon receiving back the material from the transcriber, I reviewed each interview while re-listening to the original recording and made corrections.

I completed all the interviews within a three week interval to prevent diffusion of my focused attention to the data. After all the interviews were completed, I arranged a one week period of reprieve from my professional activities and most of my personal obligations and responsibilities during which time I sequestered myself with the data. My intent was to enter into a living engagement and conversation with the data, a partnership of inquiry whereby the data came to life and guided me toward understanding it and whereby it revealed its subtle messages as I maintained a stance of being intrigued, open, and curious.

Narrative Descriptions

As a way to enter into greater relationship with the interview data, I wrote a two-page narrative description for each individual participant. This happened prior to moving into analysis of the data in aggregate form. Composing each participant's story in this way revealed more personal connections and deeper meanings inherent in a participant's experiences. These narrative descriptions were constructed in a manner that attended to their expressiveness, contextuality, sense of identity, and other elements that enabled me to see the essential quality and gestalt of each person. Attending to the data in this way focused my attention on identifying the images and metaphors that underlay each

person's unique nature. Each of these narrative descriptions were sent back to their respective participants for their feedback about accuracy and new insights they generated. These stories are included in my final report.

Thematic Analysis

Upon completing the narrative descriptions, I read and re-read the transcripts and made notes about them, listening and watching for emerging patterns and themes. Similar to how Follett (1924) described the emergence of unity and integration produced from diversity, I sought to understand how the experiences of various participants could be integrated into unifying themes. These themes were to be captured in a visual, mindmapping-oriented format, allowing them to further unfold, organize, and reorganize. Once the themes were revealed, the rigor of analysis continued by converting these themes into thematic codes. As a professor at the Case Western Business School and a leadership researcher, Richard Boyatzis (1998) provided useful guidance on developing thematic codes. He described the five elements exhibited by a good thematic code:

1. A label (i.e., name);
2. A definition of what the theme concerns (i.e., the characteristic or issue constituting the theme);
3. A description of how to know when the theme occurs (i.e., indicators on how to 'flag' the theme);
4. A description of any qualification or exclusions to the identification of the theme;
5. Examples, both positive and negative, to eliminate possible confusion when looking for the theme. (p. 31)

Using the criteria enabled me to capture the richness of meaning in the composite stories shared by my research participants.

To further mine the data I overlaid affinity diagramming approach and mindmapping processes. Part of this entailed using color coded 3x3 Post-its and a dozen large foam boards to cluster ideas into similar categories. As a visual and creative process, this was especially aligned with the spirit of aesthetically-oriented approaches to analyzing data.

Another Layer of Analysis

An additional aspect of my analysis focused on understanding the participants' personal practical knowledge—a blend of both their theoretical, practical, experiential understanding—by identifying the images and metaphors that underlay their mental models (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Thus, in the analysis of participants' stories, I sought to identify metaphoric descriptions used to explain their sense of what was going on by paying special attention to language used to depict visual images in their mind's eye, images that might be influencing their thinking and guiding their actions.

The Final Chapter

After engaging in a thoroughly intimate relationship with the data, I entered the final phase of creative synthesis: composing a report about my findings. During the two months of writing and rewriting, I moved into a deeper and fuller relationship with the data and found myself making new discoveries. In writing various types of analytical and reflective memos about the data, in writing numerous iterations and drafts of the findings chapter, I felt myself shift into a closer partnership not only with the data, which at this point took on a life of its own, but also with my interview participants, my readers, and even myself. In the end I metaphorically came to see myself, the qualitative researcher,

as an investigative reporter: As someone using herself as a vehicle for gathering information about a relatively elusive and veiled phenomenon, then exposing and reporting my discoveries. In doing so, not only have I offered a valuable intellectual contribution to the academic and practitioner communities that this research was intended for but also I have simultaneously experienced a huge personal transformation. Through my first hand experience in conducting qualitative research I have a new, previously unimaginable appreciation for the role of the qualitative researcher as one who intervenes to reveal powerful but cloaked phenomena.

Chapter 4: Findings

Participant Group Profile

All participants are organizational leaders in the business world with significant experience in one or more artistic activities. Our participant group is comprised of three women and five men. They represent five different artistic mediums: three filmmakers, three musicians, a furniture crafter, a painter and a gymnast.

Participant	Primary Artistic Modality
Bill	Filmmaking
Janet	Gymnastics
Jonathan	Woodworking
Justin	Music - Singing/Songwriting
Lucy	Painting
Reese	Music - Oboe/French Horn Player
Terry	Music - Singing/Songwriting
Ethan	Filmmaking

Narrative Descriptions

This section presents a narrative summary of each interview participant. In preceding the next section, presentation of thematic findings, this section attempts to provide the reader with a more holistic view of each person who participated in this study. Getting acquainted with the participants individually will provide greater context and meaning for the reader when reviewing the aggregate analysis.

David. David's day job is being a mid-level leader in a large organization. At other times he's a woodworker. David designs and builds furniture. He likes the Craftsman style, not only because of the subtle angles that cause people to view architecture and furniture of this period as beautiful but also because of the style's philosophy. He points

to how many woodcrafters and architects from the Craftsman period were inspired by nature and sought to harmonize with it. This resonates for David who also identifies with this view.

David sees woodworking as similar to working with people. He describes himself as a “collaborative leader” as opposed to a “heroic leader.” He explains how he shifted from the latter to the former during his leadership journey. As a younger leader, David explains how he sought to adopt the traits of a heroic leader, someone who knows it all, has all the answers, someone who needs to be the “commanding general.” David describes that since he’s grown as a leader and shifted away from this approach, he feels freer and lighter, no longer needing to carry the burden of having to know everything, no longer needing to feel threatened or denigrated when others have a different view. These days, David welcomes different views.

David works with power tools while engaged in the art of woodworking. These power tools are dangerous equipment and thus he is extremely focused and present while using them. He brings this same sense of focus and presence to business conversations and negotiations with teams he participates on and leads. He is both open and fully focused on listening and asking questions while considering different viewpoints and advocating for his own convictions. Just as he goes into a flow experience with his woodworking art, he seems to enter a similar experience when engaged in team conversations. He describes multiple scenarios where showing up in this way led to diffusion of conflict and tension, where guarded stances became disarmed and where intelligent decisions were made.

The projects David leads tend to have big consequences for his organization. David explains how he makes hundreds of little and big decisions weekly during a project's lifecycle. These decisions entail planning and problem-solving akin to the types of planning and problem-solving he continuously engages in while woodworking. Variables are constantly changing and one must constantly attune to what's going on. In woodworking this includes the kind of wood one is using and what you want to do with that wood and how that wood is behaving on any given day due to weather changes and other considerations. One must pay close attention to things that occur that are not on the plan. Joe describes various situations in both his leadership work and his woodworking where multiple choices had to be made as new information became available and how he made these decisions and solved problems using both his cognition and intuition.

David also sees another similarity between engaging in woodworking and leadership. He experiences a similar process in both activities of moving from frustration to curiosity to resolution. Both works entail starting with a plan and that soon goes astray. At this point David first gets frustrated then shifts into curiosity. Through curiosity he can explore and see options that were not previously visible. This provides David with new possibilities and choices which then enable him to either make what he describes as "lemons from lemonade" or find other ways to resolve complications.

Justin. Justin is relatively new to organizational leadership. He spent the majority of his adult life as the lead vocalist in a well-known rock band. For ten years after college, he and his band toured around the world performing songs that Justin wrote. These days Justin spends less time singing and songwriting and more time parenting and being a leader at a rapidly growing high-tech company. During the past year he has been

leading a team of 15 people responsible for user experience support.

Justin's team has multi-faceted and extremely demanding duties. The group's size is quite small relative to the number of requests they process; thus they need to work smart and efficiently. Team members need to continually anticipate what's ahead and seek ways to improve processes. This need to keep a pulse on what's going on and figure out how to best respond requires full attunement, innovative thinking, and feeling empowered to take action. Justin's leadership style fosters the collective intelligence required from this team.

For someone new to leadership and corporate life, Justin feels unusually comfortable in his role. He describes how he leads with his "ease of interaction with people" and by "creating fun work environments". It may be that Justin's leadership style is an extension of his musical experiences. Through some powerful encounters with the creative process, Justin has learned that you can't force creativity to happen. For instance, he recalls how he felt inspired while writing the songs for the band's highly acclaimed first album, but couldn't reproduce the same inspired state when he tried to force it the next time around. This is akin to the way Justin engages with his team. He gives them lots of leeway and freedom to do things their own way. When he engages with people it is in a professional but 'light' way: giving them space to feel empowered, to use their own unique perspective to see what needs to happen, and to take initiative.

As a band leader Justin's style was informed by the 'excitement' and 'being in the moment' state-of-mind that occurred while writing and performing music. This led him to embrace a zen-like approach to leading: one where his only concern is about "showing up" and trusting that he will know when to insert himself. He describes himself as

someone who rarely thinks about the future and tends to forget the past. The excitement of the current moment prevails over all else. Justin shows up in this same way as a leader in his current organization.

Justin is concerned with wanting his team members to feel very comfortable. He likes being nice. He has a democratic approach that involves everyone; that treats everyone as an important person. He gets results in ways that seem to exude from his natural way of being. “Believable,” “likable,” “at ease,” are some terms that describe Justin’s presence. These are the same words one might use to describe Justin as they watch one of his music videos.

Finally, Justin is mindful of the confidence he brings to his leadership. Justin talks about the confidence he developed in performing his songs to audiences. Playing one’s own song for others’ entertainment is a deeply self-expressive act that takes significant courage. Despite the audience composition during his music performances, Justin got people energized and engaged very quickly. Whether it was a formal black-tie event or a bunch of kids, people would be dancing and tuned in within minutes. Now this confidence serves him well in how he relates with his team and with others in the organization. Despite differences, people get caught up in the groove; they attune to being part of the group and get inspired by the “infectious energy.”

Lucy. Lucy is a painter who spends her days as an IT executive in the financial services industry. Lucy remembers painting since childhood, but six years ago her artistic interest took on a new level of seriousness. She rented space near her home and began spending weekends at her art studio. She also began participating in art shows to sell her paintings.

Lucy's foray into more dedicated art-making coincided with big changes in her leadership approach and work life. She explains her shift from being a "Dragon Lady" type executive whose stance was "why isn't this done?" "why isn't this better?" to a more empathetic leader who strives to create a sense of "I'm here to help" "I'm here to make things better" "I'm here to serve you;" a transition of being completely directive to a more collaborative management style. During this transition she also changed jobs and geographic locations, moving from being a vice president at a very large company to taking a higher profile role at a smaller company.

Lucy describes how both her artwork and leadership work illustrate the I Ching philosophy of "there is always chaos and confusion before genius." She finds that abstract, out-of-the-box thinking is useful for dealing with chaos and confusion in both painting and business. Confronted with a blank canvas she begins throwing paint around, similar to Pollack, and allows a sense of direction and design to emerge. She relates this to managing people, explaining how there is a working with traditional management practices or a "thinking outside-of-the-box" way of solving problems. Lucy explains how choosing the latter produces better results but requires more presence, intuitive thinking and creativity.

Both painting and leading projects entail grappling with the same questions of "where are we going?" "what's it supposed to look like?" Lucy explains how these questions appear continuously throughout the process and require perpetual negotiations with the mediums at your disposal: in art, with colors, paint textures, and so forth; in business, with conversations and resource allocations, for example.

When Lucy paints she enters into a zone similar to meditation. In this state, she experiences a sense of calmness and empowerment that transcends her leadership work. She refers to this creative time of being in the zone while painting as her *anchor*, a place of centeredness she can retreat to when faced with stressful situations at work. She builds and hones this capacity while painting and it, in turn, enables her to courageously face whatever is going on in her work life. She refers to this state as being in a cocoon, where she feels both protected and freer to be sensitive to her surroundings, less apt to take things personally or react inappropriately.

Lucy describes this zone as also providing her with access to an other-worldly form of knowing, one where she feels like she is being channeled, where something else is working through her. Right actions are presented to her directly, without requiring thought. For instance, in painting she recalls how all of a sudden her hands know what to reach for and what to put where, her eyes know what to focus on. In her leadership work, she sees this happen during conversations where she instinctively knows when to respond and when to listen. Moreover, being centered enables Lucy to contribute in what she calls a subliminal way. She recounts how oftentimes she goes into a meeting and doesn't say anything, but rather quietly observes and puts out a positive, harmonizing light. Yet, after these meetings, people congratulate her on what a great job she did in managing the meeting. The fact that she contributed virtually no words to the conversation during the meeting and yet gets the praise for being so effective greatly amuses her.

Reese. Reese is an executive at a large software and consulting organization. Her role is a job share where she partners with another working mom, each of whom work three days per week. Together with her job-share partner, they lead up the services

marketing team. Reese explains how job-sharing requires immense coordination with her partner, with the six person team that reports to them, with their peers, and throughout the organization for which job-sharing is a novel concept. Reese loves shaking up the status quo, coming up with new ideas, and getting people to think differently and bigger. Introducing both her current and previous organization to job-sharing is one of her many leadership accomplishments.

Reese describes herself as someone who has loved to draw since childhood, and someone for whom music as always been an important part of her life. She plays various instruments including the oboe, English horn, and violin. She has especially enjoyed playing these instruments in orchestras. Reese makes frequent mention of the parallels between her experience playing in an orchestra and leading her organization. For instance, she describes how playing a solo during an orchestral performance of the William Tell Overture is akin to how she sees belonging to an organization. Whether it's performing with an orchestra or leading an organization, Reese notices the degree to which she is in harmony with others and to which others are in harmony with each other. *Harmony, rhythm, and beauty* are words she uses frequently through our interview conversation. As are *drawing, drafting, and sketching*.

Reese sees much of her leadership role as providing people with a rhythm to follow. Especially beautiful melodious rhythms like those created by the Classical Russian composers she loves. Reese explains how creating such rhythms in organizations takes miscommunication out of the system and enables people to become better connected with one another and with customers. Especially in an organization like hers which is very large and difficult to navigate, people tend to get caught in activities that

she describes as haphazard and driven by disparate goals. Reese sees a key aspect of her role as helping coordinate actions among divergent groups to serve the greater good of the company.

Reese explains how she studied architecture in college because she always wanted to design buildings. She went on to get a master's in engineering so she could have the creative freedom to do design-build projects where she'd be involved in the entire process. These days Reese's job does not require overt creative expression in the traditional sense as one might find in architecture and music-making. However, as our conversation comes to a close, Reese mentions she has become aware of how creative expression is a big part of how she operates: especially as related to the expression of ideas. Reese discloses how she loves to talk and offer ideas. She loves to brainstorm, think about new ideas, and *push the envelope*. She describes her realization about how thinking out-of-the-box and being creative are core values for her and how she hopes to carve out more time for this aspect of her leadership work.

Terry. While Terry is relatively new to being an organizational leader, he has worked with many organizational leaders as a coach and consultant. Up until five years ago, Terry worked as a *singleton*. Today, the leadership consulting firm he founded has grown to five full-time employees and various partner relationships. Working with a unique business model and based on intellectual property Terry built, the company provides coaching, licensing, training, and will soon enter the software business.

Terry describes his company as being in the business of "selling an art form" -- that of "a state of being." He draws from his lifelong musical experiences to describe his work as a leader to "getting out of the garage and onto the stage."

Terry is a prolific musician. Since childhood he has played a number of instruments including the piano, trumpet, horn, all types of guitars, and keyboard. He is also a vocalist and songwriter. Earlier in his life, he was a popular rock star, especially in Indonesia. Today he still loves to play music though mostly while alone in his garage, late into the night, often through the weekend. Terry describes how he enters a “trance state” while playing. He portrays this trance state as being a visionary environment where he creates his life and his business. He explains how he enters into a symbolic and energetic field during these trance states; a space of intense resonance and vibration. During these states Terry experiences a strong sense of freedom and sense of purpose. He emerges from a productive trance state with extreme potency and presence: his energy field is clean and creative and able to merge into the symbolic experiences of others. This enables him to be highly inspired and inspiring with both clients and employees. Terry describes himself as an “inspirational leader.”

Terry distinguishes between the *artist archetype* and the *leader archetype*, associating himself with the former. He describes this distinction as the artist being driven by a life’s purpose versus the leader being driven by more practical issues. As an “artist who is good at business,” Terry feels torn between his deeper purposes and needing to attend to the practical. He has cleverly designed an organization that will free him to be more creative. Wanting to ensure he will not be *buried* by the organization, he has brought in a managing partner to handle the day-to-day operations while Terry focuses on generating passive income for the firm.

Terry also struggles with fully stepping into his power as a leader. Partly because of his spiritual inclinations and also because of his experiences observing rock stars who

are prone to ego inflations due to power, Terry has reservations about being the “leader of the group” instead of “part of the group.” He feels more comfortable as the latter but is seeking ways to become more mindful of and integrated with his role as “the leader.”

Terry feels a strong sense of urgency to fulfill his mission, both on the organizational front and with his music. His music is a way into the trance state, which then provides the vision and inspiration for his organizational endeavors. Terry describes it as the “wellspring” for the business and all aspects of his life. These trance states enable him to design a state of being for himself and others—the core offering of his organization.

Bill. Bill is an early internet entrepreneur who founded several companies and is currently running an organization that brought him in as the CEO. Bill describes himself as a good artist since childhood. Art was an integral part of his life and through his art-making he gained self-esteem as a kid and young adult. While his leadership activities today do not provide opportunities to engage in art-making in the same explicit way as during his earlier years, Bill sees how his artistic expression leaks through to inform his approach to organizational leadership work.

While Bill worked in many different art-making mediums, during college he studied film and became a film-maker. His experiences with film-making profoundly shaped his way of engaging with the world around him: interpreting and communicating about events through a storytelling perspective. Bill frequently uses artistic language such as *telling stories, painting pictures, blank canvases, molding clay*, and attending to *semiotics* to explain what he does.

Bill refers to his work as being in a “dream job” where he gets to do stuff he loves most of the day. He loves mentoring others and spends much of his time one-on-one developing his staff’s leadership capacities and eliciting their creative forces to solve problems and sort out conflicts. He also spends time speaking with investors and making speeches to employees. Thus, the vast majority of Bill’s time is spent communicating with others.

Bill’s inspiring leadership and communication style breeds an environment free of political distractions. His transparency, candidness, willingness to be vulnerable, and genuine care about his employees creates a culture of trust. Bill’s desire to keep others emotionally engaged and interested steers him to use verbal and nonverbal artistic techniques that appeal to the human side of people. He distinguishes himself from more traditional, metrics and data-driven CEO’s whose approach disregards the emotional side of business. Bill sees this approach as contrary to inspiration and the creative process. Referring to data-driven approaches to leading organizations he says: “If to be successful requires that kind of leadership, it’s totally not my game.”

Bill is highly imaginative and has the ability to see emerging trends and patterns before they’re visible to most people. Some colleagues lovingly refer to this as his “reality distortion field.” This capacity to see things in new and different ways, combined with his enthusiasm and authenticity, generate excitement amongst his colleagues, investors and employees. His success in building four companies is a testament to the power of this leadership style.

In addition to his experiences with art and film-making, Bill credits parenting with teaching him valuable leadership lessons. He sees how being an actively involved

father of three children has honed his intuition and ability to create inspiring learning environments. He explains how relating to highly emotive children requires a lot of artfulness and gut-thinking, leading to his declaration that “parenting is the ultimate training ground for art in leadership.”

Janet. Janet is a marketing executive in a large corporation. She brings a unique perspective to her role: that of someone who was a competitive gymnast earlier in life. For eight years during high school and college Janet was immersed in the practice of using her body to accomplish highly challenging and aesthetically pleasing moves. This experience left a deep impression on her. For instance, she developed a view of engineering, her college major and initial career focus, as a creative process. Janet held a novel perspective in how she approached her work as an engineer: as someone creating things to satisfy a certain goal. As her career progressed and she became an organizational leader, the spillover effects of her earlier aesthetic experiences have endured.

Janet describes her years as a gymnast as highly formative in shaping who she is; it was a big part of her identity and everyday focus. During the years of training her body to fly through the air, land gracefully, and perform other gravity-defying moves, she learned how to overcome fear and take risks. She describes how she experienced being “in the zone”: a state of intense focus where her attention was focused only and completely on the present moment. This ability to stay in the present and thus to block out fear benefits Janet in her organizational leadership role. Janet cites numerous business situations where her performance as a leader was enhanced by these qualities.

Janet's leadership style is collaborative and team-oriented. She enjoys partnering with others at work and in life. Her current role is a job-share with another one of our participants, Reese. Together these women lead the services marketing department of their organization, often engaging together or with their team in brainstorming activities to solve complicated problems. Janet loves this creative collaboration. Blended together with her results-oriented perspective these qualities enable her to successfully attain the high goals she sets for herself and her team.

Fun is essential for Janet. She explains it as the distinguishing element that determines which colleagues she likes to spend time with as well as her primary motivation for working. In relating the importance of fun back to her gymnastics life, she talks about how the floor exercises were among her favorite things because they enabled her to do so many different things and express more of her personality; which in turn made it more fun for her. Similarly, in business, she associates fun with doing "new and different" things that keep her and her team constantly learning and challenged. "Figuring things out," is a creative endeavor that keeps Janet motivated and engaged. Her love of solving problems, the practice of figuring out how to get from one point to the other, is a central theme in Janet's approach to organizational leadership.

Ethan. From a young age, Ethan dreamed of being a filmmaker. Yet when it was time for college, his parents dissuaded him from studying the arts, strongly encouraging a more practical path instead. Ethan studied the humanities, majoring in comparative literature and dabbling in music. Soon after, using his humanities education as a foundation, he became a filmmaker. Today, Ethan is an executive at a high-growth mid-size technology company.

As the creative director, Ethan leads a department of 30 + creative professionals. He describes himself as a “concept person,” someone who generates and executes ideas. With an “endless imagination” Ethan constantly seeks new, better, and different ways to do things. His repulsion for the “tired and true” and enthusiasm about new possibilities drive him to push everyone, including himself, out of their comfort zone and into accomplishing their “best work.” This tendency has resulted in his team producing innovative and pioneering work, not only for the company’s clients, but for raising the industry standard.

Ethan is a confident, witty, animated and passionate leader who likes “exciting” things. He’s quick to point out the dangers of boredom as a way for people (including himself) to lose interest and become disengaged. He likes to challenge himself and his team to make things exciting and interesting for others. He is known to frequently ask “Why do I care?” to ensure that what’s being presented and offered is relevant to and resonant with the intended audiences. Ethan is highly attuned to “audience experience;” he wants to ensure that the products and services provided by his team capture interest and keep users deeply engaged.

One capacity Ethan draws on to accomplish this, to attend to “audience experience,” is storytelling. Influenced by his background in the humanities and in making documentaries and music videos, Ethan is relentlessly looking for “the story.” Seeing himself as an investigator, researcher, and archeologist, Ethan continuously asks questions and listens to figure out what’s really going on and where the story is. Being a storyteller is an important part of Ethan’s identity, of how he experiences and engages

with the world. By using storytelling as the foundation for his work, Ethan creates a captivating emotional appeal for users.

Ethan sees himself as living in the hyphen between artist-leader; a creative person in a corporate job. As an artist, Ethan is concerned with the creative and aesthetics aspects of things, as a leader his focus is on making sure things get done. He considers himself a “shape-shifter” able to adapt himself to meet the different needs of different situations. For instance, one minute he can be creating as he goes, without a blueprint, the next minute he can be in project manager mode holding his team to tight deadlines and timelines.

Ethan is relationship-oriented; he truly cares about and enjoys the people he works with. He has a collaborative leadership style that fosters a familial spirit amongst his team while also generating cooperative interactions with others throughout the organization. Ethan also places a high value on integrity and being true to his core. When Ethan does something, he really believes in it. This extends to backing his people up and taking responsibility when things go wrong. These qualities have earned him his team’s trust and respect.

Themes

Agency-in-community. Participants expressed a theme we will call agency-in-community. Borrowing language from David Bakan (1966) and Jean Baker Miller (1986), agency-in-community is a simultaneous sense of *autonomy* - associated with confidence, self-expression and choice - and *community*, expressed through the feeling of being connected with others, a larger whole. Agency-in-community is a relational stance where one’s sense of identity emerges from the context of relationships that are threaded

into one's life. It entails having the empowerment to act while also recognizing the mutuality and resonance that occurs when one is engaging with others.

Participants talked about their sense of self as emerging from two modalities: that of self and communion with the other(s). As demonstrated throughout our conversations, this intersubjective perspective involves the interplay between the need to assert the self while at the same time recognizing the value of other.

One of our participants, Reese, relates her experience of playing the English horn in an orchestral performance of the William Tell Overture. Reese describes how playing the solos gives her an opportunity for self-expression, to be heard, while being part of the orchestra gives her a “sense of belonging,” “connectedness,” and “being in harmony with” others:

I had an entire orchestra with me, of beautiful, beautiful music and a lot of people's time spent practicing where I could just express emotion in the way that the music played and felt and sounded.

Reese's comment below portrays her experience of agency-in-community during the orchestral performance:

At first, it's extraordinarily energizing because you can feel your part coming, and you know that there's going to be all these eyes on you. It is a little bit stressful and energizing, but at the same time, it's kind of a release to be able to get that emotion out and be able to show that in a beautiful way.

Other participants speak to this theme through their joint focus on appreciating and interacting with others, while also being conscious of putting forth their own voice. For instance Ethan, whose artistic pursuits include filmmaking, talks about how he has a “strong ego” and confidence to speak his views and take a stand for his high standards. In talking about his organizational leadership role as the creative director of his 40-person department, he explains that “the creative director is the director and not necessarily the

team.” However, in the same breath he goes on to talk about how he considers himself to be very collaborative and values others’ perspectives. Using variations of the word *collaborative* at least a dozen times during our conversation, he explains “you’re bringing in all these collaborators to help you put this puzzle together, to make sense out of it.”

Another participant, Terry, also pays deliberate attention to simultaneously “being the leader and being part of the group.” He is conscious about the power of his role and the influence he has on others because of his role, yet he is intentional about “creating a shared environment with others”

to step into the sacred state of owning the power that I’ve created and to see that as honorable and not as some threatening ego trip

Another participant, Jonathan, is also driven by a sense of agency-in-community. His use of the trapeze artist as a metaphor for his leadership approach illustrates this theme. Describing how the trapeze artist has to do lots of maneuvers and make split second decisions that ensure they’re doing their moves correctly while also ensuring others don’t slip or fall:

There has to be a lot of kind of knowing and understanding and synchronicity between the team members...each one needs to rely on the other.

In various situations he explains that “I as a manager held strong to my convictions about what we needed to do.” Yet, he also talks about valuing interdependence and collaboration:

I don't necessarily see leadership as being the one who's the be all and end all...more of the one who's really kind of like trying to keep it all together and make sure everybody's working together towards the same goal and everybody's included.

seeing if others have a perspective that they think that I should take a look at and be open to seeing another’s perspective but also trying to help others be open to my perspective as well

I assumed that I had certain information but they probably had a lot of other information that I may not have had.

The agency-in-community experience is also echoed by other participants. For instance, Justin talks about how he is “confident about expressing himself” and also how he “respects different working styles.” He explains that as long as people are succeeding and producing the right results, he refrains from imposing his views on employees about *how to get stuff done*.

We have some people who only want to go sit on a couch in the corner and they only work from there. It’s like, well, you’d probably be more efficient if you had two monitors and were sitting at your desk but hey, you’re doing good work.

Justin also talks about how sometimes humility and patience are required when working with people or groups who bring different strengths to the community. In referring to the balancing act between respecting his own and his team’s autonomy while working with the ‘rockstars’ of the organization-the highly-respected engineering team who holds “a very different perspective of the product,” he describes:

the challenge I think for me is always how to interface with them, how to get those types of people to respect me and my team and actually realize that these people on my team are super smart too.

Bill talks about how much he values collaboration explaining “My inspiration depends on others”. He enjoys having others to bounce around ideas with, something to “build on” and respond to. Referring to the creative process inherent in this collaboration that arises from agency-in-community, he says “give me some clay to start molding.

Harmonizing the organization. Reese brings up the idea of *rhythms* and how they serve a sense of agency-in-community. She uses the construct of rhythm to describe patterns and predictability that enable individuals to relate their individual role to that of

the larger whole. These rhythms provide others with a feeling of predictability. Reese describes a challenging leadership experience where she created structures and processes to harmonize a situation full of chaos, miscommunication, and divergent goals. “We created a really strong rhythm for how these things went.” She goes on to explain that rhythm “takes all of the miscommunication out of the system, and it gives people an outlet to express themselves.”

It's creating harmony amongst the different regions, too, because we can say, “Well, how do you plug into this? How does your region look at these offerings? Which of these do you want to focus on? Which of these are important, and are any of these even things that you're trying to drive?” And then, we can all understand each other and see each other and hear each other and have a common framework to communicate around and understand. It's like a language, it's like we've created a language with each other.

Reese continues with the orchestra metaphor to credit rhythms with fostering a sense of agency-in-community by bringing both harmony and efficiency to her organization:

Instead of spending all their time trying to be heard, now they can plug right in and get their own little time for their own little solo, because it's all in a big score.

Whether with employees, individual clients or client groups, Terry explains how he can “quickly enter into the symbolic experience of the people I'm working with.”

I'm tuned into their symbolic state then I'm connecting with my symbolic state and their symbolic state and it creates an energy transfer.

Referring to relationships with employees, clients and other stakeholders, Terry says “our business model *is* the community...being part of and building community is fundamental to us.”

Another way this theme is exemplified is in how Ethan talks about using himself as a vehicle which connects various parts of the community. Drawing from his artistic

experiences in filmmaking, especially as related to his ability to tell cohesive stories of complex matters, Ethan relates how his role involves understanding, synthesizing, and harmonizing the specialties of various members of his team together with what has meaning for the organization's clients:

The director has to play all those elements collectively along with the story yet he or she has to consider each of those things along with what is the outside audience going to think about this. I have to put myself in the body of somebody whether or not they're in London, Tokyo, Paris, New York, Louisiana, wherever, sitting down either in front of their mobile device or their notebook and engaging in one of these virtual experiences, and I have to say, "Does this make sense? Do I care? Am I bored? Am I interested? If I am interested, what interests me the most?"

This role of connecting different parts of the organizational community is also addressed by Reese when she suggests that the most important aspect of her role as a leader is "making connections between the right people."

Another participant, Bill, talks about how he fosters a sense of agency-in-community using techniques such as drama and storytelling. Describing a meeting with two members of his senior team who had conflicting views about how to approach an issue, he engaged them in a creative process to elicit a sense of shared ownership.

Got some drama and it gets them riffing in a sort of- I'm stimulating them and I'm using techniques to kind of bring them into the creative process. There's an ownership. So, as they contribute to a process like this, and they draw one line or they make one statement, and that statement gets captured and becomes part of the story, you could tell that their passion and their willingness to accept increases because they are coming to their own conclusions, they are taking ownership of this piece. It becomes theirs. So there isn't a conflict of yours versus mine, it's now everybody's.

Another participant, Lucy, talks about how participation in the system is of key importance for her. She tries to foster greater participation by her employees even though the company culture is one of "I come to work and just keep my head down." Explaining how she's trying to change this culture, she encourages her employees to open up and

share their ideas, telling them:

Hey, I'm not the end-all be-all, I have a title, okay, but at the end of the day, I'm very open to suggestions, I'm very open to different ways of doing things.

I have lots of ideas and I love to share them. Reese also describes how an equally important part of being in relationship with others entails being able to express and share her ideas, providing a hook for people to connect with and build on together. Describing herself as an ideas person, she doesn't just like to keep them to herself. Sharing her ideas provides her with much meaning and gives her a sense of contributing to the collective.

Janet speaks to this subtheme in a metaphoric way. When asked if there's an image that captures her approach to leadership, she cites the dolphin:

The reason is that dolphins are communal animals, they live in communities, they like being with each other. They're an animal that we know has a lot of communication within the community and the communication is instrumental to their survival or their success.

I seek to resonate with my audience. Another element of agency-in-community is concern with *audience experience*. Our participants describe their use of autonomous action as a means to attend to audience/client experiences. As we see from participant comments, part of this theme sounds like the more traditional *client-focused* orientation that is generally espoused in business and organizational effectiveness theories. However, this theme goes beyond and is a more nuanced and sophisticated form of appreciation for the experience of others. There is concern for the client/customer/audience from a more artistic perspective...that of their aesthetic experience.

This aspect is perhaps best exemplified by Ethan, whose artistic experience involves film-making, and who uses the actual term audience experience numerous times

in our conversation. Referring to what his company sells he reframes the end product: "We're selling a lifestyle far more than an application." He explains his concern with audience experience as

What do people care about? What are people going to relate to? How can we make this aesthetically pleasing for the audience?

Other participants also touch on the importance of audience experience by talking about the need to "focus on what the customer wants." For instance, Reese describes her frustration when other departments in her organization create products without enough customer input.

Our biggest challenge is that the team that's designing the end product is not listening to our customers. They're not getting any customer input, they're not getting any market input. And from a leadership perspective, I like to work with a lot of input.

Relaying a specific situation where her company's engineers designed a product without customer feedback and launched it at their big customer trade show, she describes her sensitivity to customers' experience of being presented a product they had little input on.

I think the customers felt very much like this is an engineering solution and no one's input was being taken into consideration.

The customers were up in an uproar because it wasn't going to meet what they wanted, and they really wanted to use the product.

In an especially poignant display of agency-in-community, she describes giving feedback to the presenting engineer where she attempts to instill this same concern with audience experience in him:

Delicately, we approached the person, whose feelings had already been hurt because they had been criticized by the customers, and said, "Based on what just happened, we're just thinking maybe a way to alleviate that pain that you just had to go through is to have some customer input so that those customers could've felt like there had been some customer input into design, because there was obvious

there hadn't been any. And a way that you could avoid this pain in the future is if you could start the whole presentation by saying, "This is our customer advisory board. This is who's providing us input for the design."

Likewise, Janet demonstrates her attention to this issue when she talks about a similar situation:

Let's think about who the audiences we need to serve are and let's think about their experiences.

Janet's perspective in considering the audience's experience and urging her organization to also take this stance is reminiscent of her earlier experiences in performing floor routines during gymnastics competitions. Below she describes her concern with the experiences of the judges and the audience, whom she had to resonate with similar to how companies have to resonate with their customers.

And you had to have the music and you had to have the choreography and you had the dance. And we know that what made it effective is if you were totally into it then the judges could tell that, the audience could tell that. If you were totally into it you were in sync with the music you were-- had your moves down you were-- you have a cadence with it.

I enjoy developing others. Another key element of agency-in-community described by participants entails developing others, members of the team and others in the organization, to be more effective in their organizational roles. Our participants describe their use of agency, by intentionally taking action, to benefit others and themselves. The participant interviews indicate that this effort toward developing others benefits not only the larger organization of which the leader and the employee are a part, but also has direct personal gains for the employee. Interestingly, it also seems to provide the leaders with positive emotional advantages in the form of satisfaction, joy and delight.

Most participants explicitly stated that developing others is an important and highly fulfilling aspect of what they do. For instance, bringing the sense of joy from her artistic expression as a painter, Lucy explains that “the most important part of leadership is training your replacement.” She goes as far as to describe it as her “greatest achievement.”

My greatest achievement in general is getting people promoted, growing them as individuals, challenging them as individuals.

Lucy continues by describing an especially memorable situation with an employee she helped advance to levels the employee would have not envisioned for herself:

Jane, a woman who suffers from horrible anxiety, I had put her out on disability twice... And she never thought she could be much more than a project manager. And before I left [my previous company] she was a director. And for me, that was just the most wonderful thing because, I think part of her anxiety was her never feeling like she could fully ever support herself by herself. And, understanding that she was a really bright woman... I think people with anxiety really suffer from self-esteem, and for Jane to understand that, those issues aside, you’re very bright and intelligent, and you are excellent at what you do. Once she started believing that... It took her a long time to get her there... I think anyone that I managed to make them believe in themselves has been fulfilling. Whether they stayed or they left the job, just believing that you could do something more...

Reese speaks of how she “loves coaching people”; “really pushing them and helping them feel good about it at the same time.” Akin to the rhythm construct she used before to explain agency-in-community, her development of others might be construed as similar to getting people in rhythm with the rest of the organization/orchestra while preparing them to really shine during their solo time.

Bill talks about how “mentoring others” is “80% of what gets him to work in the morning”:

It gives me an ego boost when I can be helpful to an individual who’s struggling with their role as a leader, so I spend most of my time in one-on-one meetings with my senior management team teaching them how to be managers and

teaching them how to do their jobs, ironically, often on topics that they are more expert on in terms of the actual content than I am, and this is why I love it.

This comment is reminiscent of how Bill described the role of art-making during this childhood and high school years. “I found self-esteem through art.” He enjoyed the process of creating art and often relished in the results he produced. For instance, at age nine one of his films won a film festival award. Similarly, we might infer that Bill sees his mentoring of others as artistic expression, akin to creating a film or making another form of art (for he has an affinity for many different kinds of art-making), drawing on similar creative process to build and shape an [artistic product].

Another participant, Luke, also shares this theme in describing how he “likes to see people succeed.” He endeavors “to put people in positions where they can succeed” and views this as “one of the most important things” a leader can do.

“Stretching people,” “empowering people to be better” is also a high priority for Ethan. “I’m going to push people to do their best work,” he says; both for purposes of retaining talented employees and, just as importantly, for the sheer satisfaction of seeing someone grow and develop into more.

People aren’t going to stick around unless they have new experiences to be challenged.

My thing is like “look, if you’re going to be a great director or editor or animator or whatever, it’s because I pushed you to be something and if you leave that’s okay but I know that somewhere in there you’re going to realize that there was somebody who helped to inspire you and get you to that place.”

Lucy sums up the desire to have well-developed team, and to be part of an intelligent organization, in a way that captures the direct impact on her. She recognizes that being part of a capable organization frees her from having to do others’ jobs or

wasting effort scrutinizing and supervising others' work. Developing others to be highly capable and competent enables her to be more autonomous.

I like having people around me that are smarter, and that just means I don't have to work as hard truthfully. The smarter they are the less I have to work.... Because the better they're gonna be at their jobs.

Propensity for imaginative thinking. Imaginative thinking is defined as the ability to use non-linear, divergent, and fluid thinking processes to reinterpret reality. It includes being able to wonder, conjecture, hypothesize, and suppose, and generally leads to innovative ideas and solutions. As described by our participants, practicing imaginative thinking enables us to see more--a bigger, fuller picture of what is going on and what is emerging. Imaginative thinking tends to be facilitated by positive emotions such as joy, fun, inspiration, and excitement. Imaginative thinking welcomes the unknown, chaotic, and uncertain.

Every participant in this study spoke to the importance of this theme. Some talked about it from the perspective of how they themselves practiced imaginative thinking; others spoke about how they sought to encourage this thinking in others. Almost all the participants expressed their disinterest with, and in some cases, disdain for, the status quo as distinct from the new and different.

For Lucy, imaginative thinking is synonymous with what she calls "abstract thinking." She describes this as "being able to think of more than what's obvious to most people; trying to think about what's not so obvious; and maybe even suggesting that other people think about what's not so obvious either." She explains her own ability to think abstractly, a capacity for which she credits her artistic endeavors in painting:

The best compliment I get from anyone is "you have really great ideas" and the reason I do is because I see the blank canvas and I know you have to think outside

the box, you have to think abstractly, even if none of it makes any sense at the time, just to get you back to some sense of direction of where you want to go with it.

It's the same way in painting...in painting you might just start out with throwing paint around. Pollack is a perfect example as an artist of doing that, he'd throw a lot of paint around and at the end of the day he managed to create some beautiful artwork, and I feel the same way. I think that, for me, that totally relates to what what I do in my career.

You have an end goal in mind but through a series of negotiations get a result that is satisfying but not what you intended or expected.

In managing people, the same thing, you have to think abstractly, they have an issue... There's the 'by the book way' and then there's the 'think outside of the box, how can we create or solve something.' So I think having creative elements in your toolkit is good for business.

Lucy explains her process for imaginative thinking in artistic terms involving a wide spectrum of colors. She expands her "color palette" and thus accesses knowledge and information unavailable when working with a more constricted range.

I look at it from many different places. I don't have black and white and gray. I have a *whole* palette. I feel like I draw from an entire palette in my thinking process. I don't just draw from one place, it's either black or white some shade of gray, no. There's a lot more going on here. And I think that it's being able to think more than two dimensionally, being able to draw from that different palette, I think for me that really helps me come up with new stuff and sometimes maybe even channel stuff I didn't even know I knew.

Lucy tries to instill this capacity in her employees, encouraging them to be more "open to different ways of doing things." She wants them to be "less-stringent and less process-driven"; more tuned into what's really needed and flexible enough to respond appropriately:

We're a software development company for financial services. We follow a template for software development lifecycle; it's a specific format for managing through software development projects, and it has certain phases; it's not very iterative, it isn't flexible, that kind of thing. We're a very small company, and I understand why they started using it because they don't necessarily, or weren't using anything at all, and now they have at least some structure, but what I'm telling them is that now that you have some structure let's go back and look at

what part of that isn't working. What part of that "we have to stay with the program" "we got to do it this way" "everything's got to be this way," what part of that isn't working for us. Just trying to get them to be a little bit more flexible and thinking outside the box.

Welcoming the unknown and being present to what's unfolding is something Bill knows how to work with. Drawing from his artistic experiences, he explains how he built these capacities:

The kinds of art that I've loved have been multidimensional where it's not just me sitting down and creating a piece of work and walking away. It's a process and one that you do not know. It's not like you can pre-visualize up front exactly what the output is going to be. The act of interacting with the art changes what the outcome will be.

Bill continues by telling a story that illustrates how his imaginative thinking is perceived positively by others. Recalling a story where a colleague approached him to ask for coaching on his presentation style, the friend complimented Bill by saying:

"When you speak in front of an audience, it's messianic." He went on to compare Bill to Steve Jobs saying: "Like Steve Jobs, you have a reality distortion field." Bill recalls how he asked for clarity wondering if this was really something he should take offense to instead of feel complimented by; was his friend saying that Bill was "a person who believes my own bullshit and that I have delusions of grandeur?" However his friend clarified the compliment, explaining that:

What I meant was all positive, that when you get excited and emotional about something, people follow you in a messianic sort of way in that particular topic... Look, you know, the problem with vision is that it's future and so you have to convince somebody, in the absence of data, that something is true. It doesn't mean it's a lie but, in the absence of data, that it's true and so you have to somehow be convincing.

As Ethan points out, one's propensity for imaginative thinking can sometimes be met with skepticism in the corporate world. Ethan describes some of his frustration as a creative person practicing imaginative thinking in his organization:

I'm a creative person. A creative person doesn't live in a jail cell. And that's the thing that's the most challenging part of being a creative person in a corporate identity is that people don't understand that. It's not like building a spreadsheet, it's not a bunch of data. My mind really has to run. Some people say "I don't understand, it just seems like your team all they're doing all day is talking". You don't understand, this is brainstorming, we're not just talking shit.

I am passionate about what could be; the status quo repels me. Ethan uses the term "tired and true" six times throughout our conversation to indicate his contempt for the ways things have always been done. "I want to be challenged," he says.

I want to do something different. I don't want to do the same thing....I would be bored shitless.

Proclaiming that "there are no limits to my imagination," Ethan describes how today his "team is far ahead of the industry."

For Ethan, imaginative thinking goes beyond thinking "outside-the-box" to what he calls "outside-the-head." Alluding to how risk aversion hinders imaginative thinking, he describes the risk aversion he encountered among his team when he first moved into his current leadership role. Ethan talks about how he had a desire to be a "pioneer" and introduced a mandate to "create a unique brand identity that set my company apart from the competition."

Up until this point everyone in the industry, including my company, was following, not leading. No one was willing to draw a line in the sand and stake their claim to the market.

The hardest part of creating a new brand identity was the creative teams being risk averse for fear of being fired.

In Ethan's case, he let his team know that he "expected more."

Once everyone understood this expectation it was as if a dam had ruptured and I was literally flooded with new and innovative ideas from my team.

Like Ethan, Reese holds a similar sentiment of disinterest in the status quo. “I love taking the status quo and saying this could be so much better,” she says. To Reese, change is not difficult as she can easily see what needs to happen to “fill the void.”

I've always been the kind of person that kind of sees the void of what needs to get done and steps in and does it. Because to me, it's so obvious sometimes what needs to get done.

We're looking at it as something that's so hard to change when it's so not. We could just not do it anymore, or we could just paint it purple and we could do anything we wanted with this, just trying to always avoid the status quo and throw new ideas and get people thinking of things differently, and then get people, how do you say it, I'm trying to think of, inspiring them to get way bigger results and to have such a bigger impact with the same amount of energy, by not thinking of things the same way that we always do.

What inspires me is “coming up with those ideas that people haven’t thought of before.” Much of this happens during “brainstorming,” one of Reese’s favorite leadership activities. During these brainstorming meetings, she describes how she loves facilitating her own and others’ creative processes.

I have illuminating experiences with altered states. Almost all the participants described experiences of “flow,” “being in the zone,” and being fully “in-the-moment” that occur during times of deep immersion in something. These experiences occur both during their artistic activities as well as their organizational leadership activities.

Terry calls this state a “trance,” a term he uses over 98 times during our conversation. This trance state is something Terry often enters into while creating music. He also credits it as the source from which he manifests everything in his business as well as other areas of his life. He describes this trance state as

Entering into a creation environment where I'm tuning in to my soul journey and I'm adjusting, through the visions that come out of the trance, I'm adjusting how the music is helping me move into fulfilling this state of being, purpose on earth, state of being, images, visions, feelings, thoughts, all the different sensorial capabilities.

Terry describes how essential his music to everything he does:

And the music serves as a foundation trance where everything else comes from that. It's the wellspring of how I'm creating my life.

Lucy describes her experiences of “being in the zone” as a time when “everything starts flowing.” Whether during painting or during the course of her leadership activities, she explains the feeling of “something working through you.” Recognizing when she enters this state, she describes how she allows things to become what they want to become, using herself as a vessel.

Some of the better paintings that I've done it's just almost like I've been in the middle of it and then I get into that zone and I just all of a sudden I pick the right colors, I make the right texture of wash, everything just starts flowing.

You're working, your hands are moving, it's quiet, things are happening down here on the table, and you just know what to reach for, you know how to hold it up and look at it, and put a little more of this over here and a little more of that over there. And you just... it's a different way of knowing... it is, because you're not going “oh my God they need to get this done, oh my God if I don't get this done today it is going to take forever to dry, if I use this it's going to do that,...” It's none of that, it just flows, you don't even think about it... my eyes know how to balance the colors, if I think it needs something else it just comes to me, I don't have to go through magazines or think about it, it just comes, just comes. It's just a strange... way of being.

I do think that art takes on a life of its own and it is formed through you and how it ends up on the canvas is completely different than you would imagine.

Janet describes her experiences with “being in the zone” as a state of intense focus and concentration where everything else, including fear, is blocked out. She elaborates what this state feels like, explaining:

You're just totally focused and driven and everything else is blocked out and you just have this super intense concentration on what you're doing.

A big part of being in the zone, at least for me in gymnastics, was it blocks out fear. I mean, you're focused on doing this beautifully and so fear goes away.

Janet explains that her experiences of being in the zone are not limited to her gymnastics activities; she also experiences them in the workplace. She shares an example of when this happened during a meeting she attended:

There was a strategy session at [my company] that our boss had called. About 12 people attended. [Our boss] just put a question to the group, and people were expressing different thoughts and ideas, but there was no structure to the discussion. I saw the opportunity to structure the discussion and lead it to developing common understandings and the development of a plan, so I asked to have the whiteboard. I outlined categories, summarized comments in category, solicited more input, then steered the conversation to identifying foundation concepts and assumptions. Then we went to a plan. I felt in the zone.

Part of this theme has to do with an altered experience of time, a sense of time's passage different from the kind recorded on a clock. For instance, Lucy describes entering into a "meditative" state when she's painting:

It's otherworldly, it's like an out-of-body experience because there is no sense of time. I think that the most interesting thing for me is I could spend 6 to 8 hours standing in one spot just working on something and not even realize that much time actually passed. So it's a way of meditating without functionally meditating.

Bill describes how time disappears when he's immersed in his creative process, both during his artistic activities and at work. Bill provides the example below from his filmmaking days but later proceeds to cite another similar example of time disappearing while he was facilitating a conflict resolution meeting between two of his executives.

When you're doing this, even if you're just watching it, time disappears, completely goes away. It's 8:00 in the morning, you're sitting in a small editing suite, you're watching or participating and you're getting into this artistic process and, all of a sudden, you look at your watch and it's eight p.m. You've been in there for 12 hours. Maybe you forgot to eat. That is what a lot of my truly creative experiences in work have been, regardless of the medium....

In regards to the conflict resolution meeting he facilitated, he says:

[at] that meeting, time also disappeared...that was hours and we were all, like, we weren't bored. We didn't realize it had been so long.

Several participants refer to this state as “being in the zone,” a place of “total focus” on what one is doing in the present moment and where “time disappears.”

I think in pictures and value the visual world. Reese is a highly imaginative and visual person who is continuously drawing in her notebook or on the whiteboard to convert her and others’ ideas into images. At one point in the interview, Reese opens her notebook to show me examples of how she takes notes and does visual brainstorming. The unlined pages are full of visual language.

I draw charts and little pictures and little arrows and try to make it aesthetically pleasing. It's not as much as I would do in my design notebooks in school, but it's [similar]. To me, this is my creative outlet, it's how I capture my life in this book.

She goes on to explain how “it feels good to get the vision out of the body and onto paper.”

Stating that “what inspires me is to come up with ideas that people haven’t thought of before,” Reese talks about idea generation as a key aspect of her leadership. She enjoys trying to “get people to think differently.” Much of this happens during “brainstorming,” one of Reese’s favorite aspects of leadership. During these brainstorming meetings, she describes how she loves using visual language to facilitate her own and others’ creative processes:

I love drawing up and sketching [ideas]. I love drawing graphs, I love drawing processes, I love drawing tables, I love drawing matrices, anything like that...

Other participants also discuss the importance of using visual graphics to communicate ideas or paying attention to visual cues to gather important information. For

instance one participant explains how he frequently uses the whiteboard to help others see and make sense of otherwise elusive dynamics:

I'm able to take the symbolic experience that we're having and then translating it into simple graphics on a white board. And then that's where [others] are able to connect their symbolic state with the simple graphics on the white board and then they make that connection and it reinforces their symbolic state. It documents their symbolic state and it becomes a tool to help them access that symbolic state.

Another participant refers to the capacities he gained through film-making experiences as helping him “visualize data.” Using a form of the term “visualize” 20 times during our conversation, this participant uses a variety of visual modes, including his own body language and gestures, to convey messages:

I stood up, for example, at this point. Stood in front of the (white) board. I'm waving my arms around. I'm drawing boxes.

This same participant explains how he attunes to and becomes affected by visual cues provided by others during their interactions:

I am seeing visual cues of their engagement so that's making me feel successful and egging me on to continue to use that technique and there's sort of, it's very visual, it's very emotive, and it's very euphoric as it's working.

Some participants’ depiction of this theme entails focusing on the goal and envisioning desired outcomes. For instance, for Janet, focusing on goals is analogous with “visualizing the perfect routine” in gymnastics. Likewise, Jonathan discusses his attention on “working toward goals” in both woodworking projects and his leadership work. He explains his attention to visualizing outcomes by focusing on “What direction are we headed and is it the right direction?” “What’s our target?” “What are critical success factors?”

It's gotta be fun...and other positive emotions. Participants frequently made comments correlating “fun” and “interesting” with “creative” and “new.” They often

alluded to how positive emotions such as joy, fun, and excitement inspires themselves and others to engage more thoroughly.

This aspect is highlighted by Janet who describes the fun she has at work with the same glow as when describing her gymnastics experiences:

It is the most awesome feeling in the world to fly and to land and to do a really difficult move really well. It just feels awesome. When you see a gymnast that is totally into what they're doing and they're like nailing their routine, you just feel this incredible surge of satisfaction and pleasure. It's really pleasure. To do a vault and fly through the air and land it solid, it feels fabulous.

The swinging and the flying. I mean, honestly you swing around those bars, you fly through the air it just--there's such a freedom to it. I mean, you just feel free, you feel strong, you feel powerful. It's fun, I mean it's just fun to do it.

While she no longer practices gymnastics, the positive feelings she once experienced seem to linger on and color her choices in the work world. She credits “fun,” a term she uses 16 times in our conversation, as the reason she continues her work life. “That’s when I want to retire,” she says, referring to when she’s not having fun anymore. Janet illustrates the value she places on fun in describing how it plays out in work situations with colleagues:

It's got to be fun. This is why I jobshare with (my jobshare partner), it's fun. We enjoy it. We have a good time together. If you're not having fun it's not sustainable in my mind.

Just the other day, so it was (my boss's) birthday, and so the admin gets us all together and (one of my colleagues) he comes and he's just cracking everybody up. He said, "You know (our boss) really doesn't deserve this." And there are two cakes to go in and he's holding one and (another colleague is) holding the other. He says to (the other colleague), "I'll pay you a hundred dollars if you put that in his face." He's doing all this stuff and I'm thinking, "I want to spend more time with this guy, he's fun." He's brilliant too but he's fun.

As described in an earlier section, Janet mentioned the dolphin as a metaphor for her approach to leadership. Emphasizing the importance of fun in her leadership work, she

adds, “have you ever seen a dolphin not having fun?”

Five other participants also explicitly talk about the importance of fun. Often times they distinguish fun from “boring” and describe how they seek to “create a fun work environment.” For example, one participant can’t seem to hold back his imaginative tendencies, applying them in playful ways to whatever’s at hand. He talks about how he names environments and shots of different scenes, creating a sense of amusement, drama and joviality. In describing the notion of fun as a source of inspiration, another participant references his songwriting saying “you do it because you think it’s fun, you enjoy it.” This motivation was what kept him going even during times that he didn’t produce his best material, times when he could have easily gotten into comparing his work as being inferior to that of other well-known bands.

One participant, using highly artistic language and referencing the internet world in which his company operates, suggested an analogy between open, interesting, and not boring:

The landscape, this very sort of multidimensional landscape on which you’re creating concepts, visualizations, communication, all of it, art, is now just a canvas. I feel like people have been restricted and now it’s opening. As it opens, it becomes more interesting. That’s how I don’t get bored.

Another participant draws a similar connection in suggesting that “new and different” constitutes an antidote to boredom. Yet another participant, after making numerous references to new in the form of “new directions,” “new realizations,” “new clarity,” adds “new is good; I don’t like stagnating.”

Participants also talk about the feelings of “accomplishment,” “empowerment,” “exhilaration,” and even “euphoria” and “nirvana” they experience in using their artistic

impulses at work. For example, Bill, one of our filmmakers, describes the “incredibly satisfying” experience of creating good work:

There's a certain euphoria when you see a finished work. There's two parts. There's a sort of euphoria in the process itself of putting things together. It's the satisfaction of the snap into place of two thoughts and when you see it work. And there is another part which is sort of when you step back and you look at what you just did and it works. Doesn't always but, when it works, there is, like, wow, you

know? Self-esteem and ego boost, a feeling of accomplishment and it feels really good and it lasts. You can take it home with you and you don't stress out as much.

Elaborating on the ripple affect he brings up with the last sentence in the quote above, he talks about how positive emotions are also contagious:

...and then when I get excited, the people that I'm standing in front of will sometimes, without any data to support the direction, will follow for a bit.

Terry, one of our musicians, talks about the positive feelings that accompany inspired situations where he and his team are working together.

And everybody had this really strong feeling of momentum, and good will and stuff like that, and partnership, and fun, and creativity and magic.

Lucy, our painter, talks about how good it feels, both during her painting and in work situations, when she's able to be both productive and creative at the same time.

But when you do hit your stride and you are creative *and* productive, that for me is the nirvana. It feels *wonderful!*

Even when things don't go as hoped or turn out as desired, our participants are able to maintain a lightness and not get dragged into excess drama. One of our musicians, Justin, shares a perspective echoed by many participants: “None of this is end of the world stuff.”

Non-traditional leader. This theme addresses a topic discussed either explicitly or implicitly by all participants. It involves seeing oneself as different from conventional

leaders. Several participants alluded to a traditional leader as one who is domineering and does not seek input from others. One participant referred to traditional leaders as “militaristic” and “formulaic.” A non-traditional leader according to this group of participants suggests greater inclusivity and collaboration, a genuine desire to help and serve, a greater sense of power *with* others, more self-reflection about their values and intentions, more inclusion of emotional and intuitive ways of knowing, more concerned with inspiration and fostering creativity, and more spiritually-oriented.

Terry, a life-long musician, former rock star, and someone still deeply active in his musical endeavors, sees “music as a metaphor for business.” Comparing himself to the improvisational jazz musician and bandleader Miles Davis, he talks about how he and others in the organization are able to “jam like crazy and have a great time.” His experience of positively working together with others is one where people are able to “play off each other.”

The proclivity for a more resonant and caring-oriented way of being that underlies non-traditional leadership is underscored by a phenomenon several of our artist-leaders described: the capacity to feel intimacy and deep connection with one’s creation. Our furniture craftsman, Jonathan, talks about how he communes with what he’s producing and his feelings of connectedness toward a piece he has completed:

You're gonna have a great sense of caring and value to the finished project, to the finished piece because you knew everything that went into it. And so you'll be much more inclined to take good care of it afterward and to cherish it and to pass it along.

Likewise, our painter, Lucy, relates her attachment to her paintings. Talking about art shows where her paintings were put up for sale, she explains the caring she felt for

them in wanting to find them good homes, the right buyer who would be able to appreciate their beauty.

The hardest part for me was the [art] shows, because I didn't want to hear what people had to say about my art. I really didn't want to hear it. I didn't want the critique. It wasn't what I was doing it for. I wasn't doing it for a living, to sell it, make my name, to whatever, I just wanted to create. Which is why I gave so much of my stuff away. Because you can't put a money value on it when you do something and you think it's beautiful and somebody appreciates it you just want to give it to them, because it's like handing a piece of you over. You just want it to be loved by the right person.

Reese describes the sense of connectedness and belonging she feels to others with whom she creates music, especially after orchestral performances together.

You feel like you really can add value to the world, you feel like you belong, you feel tremendously connected because you just produced all of this music that you invest in so much time with all these other people, and all of that, those people's investment of time and concentration and working together to produce something like this, actually manifested in this beauty. And so, I think there's a real sense of connection between the people who produce, especially music, together.

I am not a field marshal. This aspect of the non-traditional leader entails an interest in inspiring and helping rather than commanding and directing. It includes one's ability and willingness to take into consideration the emotional and intuitive instead of just the cold hard facts. Six participants addressed this element.

Several participants pointed to types of conventional leadership to distinguish themselves from what they were not or what they had evolved away from. One participant used the term “the commanding general” to explain his view of an ineffective but unfortunately predominant approach to leadership:

[The commanding general] wonders why things didn't get done or why they didn't get done on time and then also what generally happens in those situations is if the things didn't get done then you hear things like “heads are gonna roll” or “there's gonna be hell to pay” or whatever... and the unfortunate result of that is that those sort of leaders or managers don't inspire a lot of confidence or a lot of cooperation or a lot of appreciation from the people that they're leading.

Several participants talked about how earlier in their career they felt the need to emulate these qualities of traditional leaders. Lucy describes how she used to be “a field marshal” and that people would often refer to her as “the dragon lady.” She uses words like “powerhouse,” “queen,” “the boss,” “being the strong one,” and “giving direction” as terms associated with her previous, more traditional approach to leadership. Interestingly she cites a correlation with her shift away from this directive and commanding leadership style with when she became more serious about her painting. Alluding to how much she’s changed in the past five years since she began renting a separate art studio and spending many of her weekends there painting, she says:

I think if you would’ve talked to me, if we were to have this conversation five years ago, I think it would have been a *completely* different conversation. I really do.

Jonathan describes how “early on in my leadership [career] I felt, like many managers, that I had to be sort of a heroic leader.” He defines heroic leader as

Some people in leadership positions feel that they have to know it all, they have to be it all, they have to do it all, they have to command it all, and they feel threatened or they feel upset or they feel, I guess, denigrated if they don’t live up to that, even though it’s something that’s really some sort of artificial that’s been placed on them, by themselves.

Jonathan goes on to explain how “freeing” it’s been “to realize and understand that I don’t have to be a heroic leader”:

It means that I can acknowledge to myself and to others that I don’t know it all and I don’t have all the answers and that I’m probably not any different from anybody else... but also that we can get there by everybody working together and everybody coming together, and that there are different viewpoints that we should take a look at and examine, and there’s nothing wrong with that.

Rather, Jonathan now considers himself a “collaborative leader” who understands that “it’s not bad to involve other people, it’s actually a good thing.”

In addition to discussing their shift away from the field marshal stance as they matured in their approach to leadership, participants elaborate further about an alternative ways of seeing and understanding that gives credence to the emotional and intuitive. This enhanced way of making sense of a situation, making decisions, and giving feedback is also indicative of a leader who is not a field marshal.

Bill describes the traditional leadership approach many current CEO's prefer as "metrics oriented," "data-driven," "unemotional," and "ruthless"--ways of being he considers "contrary to inspiration and the creative process." Despite his success in running several companies and industry-wide recognition as a highly respected leader, he says "If to be successful requires that kind of leadership it's totally not my game."

Jonathan holds a balance between the "cognitive" and "emotional and intuitive." Like several other participants he describes frequent reliance on his "gut." Jonathan's description of his gut feelings below, especially the "I'll know it when I see it" statement, is resonant of the explanation he provided for his appreciation of the Craftsman style of woodworking projects earlier in our interview: Particularly, his reference to use of a popular but very subtle three degree angle that is used in designs of this style. As he explains, the angle is too slight to detect to the untrained eye yet creates a dramatically different experience for the viewer:

you wouldn't know why you like it as somebody looking at it, you wouldn't know anything about it, you would just say, "oh that seems very pleasing," and actually it shows up over and over and over again in craftsman designs and it's just very subtle, but it's just actually 3 degrees of an arch.

Jonathan relates his attunement to subtle experiences that show up in the form of "gut feelings" in his leadership situations at work:

I knew in my gut it was the right way to go...it's kinda like one of those things where people say "well I don't know how to describe it, I don't know how to tell you what's right but I'll know when I see it."

And yet, he explains the need to find ways to "back-up" his gut with data, especially when going against the grain.

There's definitely the emotional side but you have to have the cognitive side as well saying, hey well here's the piece of paper...

...there are a lot of people who are gonna be standing there saying "well, I know what I know and I know that what we're providing is absolutely the best thing and that's the way it is and how can you tell me that I'm wrong or that the other 10 people or 15 people who fed into what I'm telling you we're gonna do is, you're basically saying that all those are wrong?"

As exemplified in his story below, Jonathan's gut led him to see things beyond the "face value" that others were working from. But he had to rely on a cognitive and traditional presentation of his view to convince others to follow along:

For me the gut feeling was we really shouldn't need a week on this, they really need to get it together, figure out what's gonna take this a week, and to come back to me with really good rationale; and so there's a little bit of a gut feeling there, but then there's also sitting down and saying okay well, "here's the project plan in black and white, here's what we need to go through, these are the steps, let me see those steps, let me validate them," luckily I understand it, other people probably would not understood the steps and would taken it at face value and probably the system would have been down for a week or more, but at the end of the day what we were able to negotiate was 3 days.

Ethan talks about how when faced with conflicting information from 'the facts' and his intuition, he "constantly goes with gut."

...sometimes they're excruciating choices, but the thing that I've learned to do is...if your gut tells you it's wrong, it is.

Reese takes the emotional side into account when giving feedback. Her intent is "not to criticize but to help."

Helping and being of service is a mentality that also drives other participants. For instance, Lucy explains how she seeks to be of service to her employees and others in her organization.

“I’m here to help,” “I’m here to serve you,” “I’m here to make things better” instead of the powerhouse I usually was, walking around asking “why isn’t this done,” “why isn’t this better.”

Lucy attributes her ability to come from this stance as informed by a mindset of gratitude and grace. Every day before she goes in to work she intentionally reminds herself that “I am here to do something,” “I am here for a reason.”

I feel like there’s a greater purpose here—whether I’m meant to be in their lives, whether they’re meant to be in my life, I have to come in here with that curiosity, “what am I going to learn today?” “Who’s going to be my teacher today?”... And I think that is a leader, “whom I’m going to teach today?” “What’s my responsibility today?” “What am I bringing to the table?” “How am I making their lives richer?”

I am courageous enough to be human, real, and response-able. The willingness to be wrong or not have all the right answers is a key aspect of the nontraditional leader stance. Seven participants spoke of experiencing emotions such as fear and yet were capable of taking action--feeling the fear and doing it anyway--taking a risk and being willing to face the consequence of failing. This element of the non-traditional leader entails the willingness to be vulnerable, fallible, and to take responsibility for being wrong or making mistakes. It is connected to courage and authenticity. It involves a person acting from a place of integrity and personal conviction while not seeking to control or force their “truth” on others.

For Bill, when a leader can show they’re “human,” when they’re able and willing to show their flaws and be honest, they engender trust.

I was screaming. I hit my--you know, I was swearing. I hit my hand on the table. You know, there was a point where I was just like, you know. Then I was also mea culpa-ing. You know, it's like I was also saying, "This is my fault. This is my mistake. I thought they had it. You know, I convinced myself of these things," you know, and exposing my own personal failure to this team was an important part of that story. Being human to them.

Earlier in this section we also discussed Jonathan's story about how he no longer needs to be heroic. He is comfortable with the vulnerability that accompanies admitting that he doesn't have all the answers.

Ethan's commitment to the integrity of his artwork seems to spill over into his sense of responsibility in his leadership work. Ethan frequently mentions how much he has to "genuinely believe in" what he's doing or making, and how he's willing to take a stand for those things. This extends to his leadership work in "taking responsibility when things go badly." For him, this is an important attribute of leadership, one that

I'm willing to step to the front of the line, and I'm willing to take responsibility where a lot of people say, "I take responsibility for this," they don't mean that at all.

Ethan describes taking responsibility as

If things go down and badly, in other words, if I execute an idea that was my concept, that I pushed my creative team to do, and I believed it, I'm not going to throw anybody else under the bus, I'm going to say, this was my idea.

Ethan also talks about this theme from the perspective of having courage. Using the metaphor of a general he says:

You have to be willing to be the first one out and be willing to get your head shot off. I mean really, I mean that's kind of how I look at it. You have to be a little fearless, when maybe a lot of people are frightened. A lot of people are frightened to do things; you know, they're afraid of failure or even worse, they're just afraid.

The need to be fearless and courageous has great personal significance for Ethan as he often feels utterly vulnerable and at risk:

I don't think there's been a single project I've done at this company where I didn't think it was a complete failure.

I'm always certain it's going to be a disaster.

Sometimes I'm literally walking off the side of the cliff, and I'm not sure if this parachute's going to actually work...I don't even know if I have a parachute.

Despite his heightened sense of risk and potential failure, Ethan actually credits this stance with what he considers an important attribute of leadership: being “open to the fact that what I thought was going to work didn't.”

Citing an important aspect of leadership success, Bill says “You have to be willing to fail.” And when things don't work out, you have to be willing “to take blame.” He describes an especially critical business endeavor that fell apart and how angry he felt with himself: “This is my fault. This is my mistake.” He goes on to explain how he wove this fallibility into his communication to the team:

Exposing my own personal failure to this team was an important part of that story: Being human to them.

Janet is another participant who speaks about risk and fear. Crediting her experience as a competitive gymnast with teaching her how to overcome fear, she recalls an experience where she was new to an exciting leadership role at a company she had been with for many years. She explains the intimidation and risk she felt in working with a very senior group of executives, especially when introducing a novel idea that she herself had never worked with before:

I realized, "You know, these people are brilliant and they know their markets really well, far better than I'll ever know their markets. So I need to look at how I add value beyond what they know." And so I introduced some new techniques

that took their time, took them out of the office, had them do some very new and different things with scenario planning that they never done before. It was scary to do it.

Other participants address this theme by noting a shift in how they receive feedback. For instance Justin talks about how he doesn't get offended or defensive when presented with critical feedback. He attributes this to the egalitarian relationships that existed amongst his band members. Everything was split up equally amongst the team members, including responsibility for ensuring they were producing the highest quality music possible:

[We were] splitting everything 25% each. And that was the way that we would sort of vat all the music too. It was like, if somebody said, "Oh, I think that song kind of sucks." If it was something that I had written or--I would never be offended or "you're wrong, this song's great." It was always like, "Oh yeah, you're right."

This spillover into his leadership style has earned him a reputation as being "likable." Justin tells how people tend to describe him "a nice guy."

Reese also speaks to this theme in describing how sometimes she "relinquishes control" to let others "lead the process." Terry speaks of aiming to have a high degree of "accountability" by "needing to walk the talk."

Another way the subtheme of 'being courageous enough to be real' shows up is exemplified by a participant who maintains self-expression and integrity by adherence to her "feminine principles." Even in the face of pressure to conform to a certain executive 'look,' she remains true to her values. Reese tells the story of an executive coach who told her she was "too nice" and she "had to stop wearing pink." She describes her reaction:

I was pretty pissed off because, number one, pink was a way that I expressed myself. It was one of my favorite colors to wear, it expressed femininity, it

expressed kindness and love. I mean, it's just a beautiful color and it was me, and I didn't think that you couldn't be a leader because you weren't feminine. So I went out and bought all pink clothes, and I shared that story with my team. And they said, "What are they talking about?" They were, like, "You know how to get people to do things. You're just nice about it. You don't get people mad or hating you or feeling like you're a dictator." So they called me a friendly driver, someone who was friendly, but getting people to do stuff at the same time, and energizing people. And so I went out, and I bought an all pink wardrobe, and from that day on, I wore pink every single day.

People are not just tools; I really care about the people I work with. Being in relationship is another aspect of the overarching theme of the nontraditional leader. This was mentioned, either directly and indirectly, by all participants during the interviews. It is defined as caring about and seeking to understand and connect with others. It entails open communication and positive interpersonal relationships; engagement with others is infused with compassion, empathy, appreciation and sensitivity.

Bill frequently uses the term “riffing” to describe energizing conversations he engages in with others, and also values seeing others engage in. Originally a musical term defined as speaking in short rhythmic phrases in an improvisational context, Bill uses “riffing” to refer to “a collaborative creative process where two or more people are essentially hearing each other’s reactions” and new ideas emerge from this interaction. Describing a highly productive meeting he observed between two executives with different perspectives and communication styles he explains:

They would go into a conference room, and I would say, “All right, we need to solve problem X on the website,” and I’d watch them riff off each other, like one guy would say this and draw a picture, and they were totally different brains, but they had this incredible chemistry, and so their collaborative process created amazing things. On their own, not so much.

Bill talks about how he “likes to treat his staff as a family.” Describing how he “cares about them” he states that “people are not just tools.” Bill is also a proponent of “open

communication” in his organization.

My company is one big room with a bunch of people sitting at desks, so any topic that anyone’s talking about you can hear, and there aren’t a lot of secret meetings.

Open communication and positive interpersonal relationships are also important to many of the other participants. For instance, Terry talks about having “loving relationships with people on his team” and about the importance of “celebrating successes.” Likewise, both Ethan and Jonathan believe in “celebrating achievements” that others or the team accomplishes. Ethan goes as far as remembering birthdays, giving colleagues nicknames, and teasing people as a way to create more intimacy and bonding with them. “I care about the people I work with” he says. Sometimes he likes to “sit down and just talk about what’s exciting [people] and why.”

Ethan discusses his efforts at “building alliances” and “giving credit to the source” of ideas. These efforts result in Ethan’s ability to work efficiently while building and leveraging relationships outside the formal channels:

This is a huge part of what determines my success. Every business book ever written makes the point that in order to be successful you have to build alliances, but it never ceases to amaze me how many people ignore this fact. Building alliances and applying credit to the source of your idea is a key barometer that allows me to operate independently without committee.

You have to build allies across the company who can mirror your message. I do this by talking to knowledge experts to understand how they see themselves in relationship to the product we are selling. The ability to personalize their relationship to the product is a key way for me to sell it to the market. Thus by assigning credit for the idea to the person it originated from I am able to create an unshakable alliance between the knowledge expert and the creative team.

I do this covertly like the best PR campaigns. I don’t volunteer specifics, but I might say to one of the knowledge experts at the water cooler that they had a great idea that we incorporated into our new ad campaign. Thus by assigning credit to the knowledge expert who is outside the creative group I help to create the impression the creative process was a committee process, even if no meeting were ever held. This has become an invaluable way for me to build alliances

outside the creative group and still keep my creative team autonomous from the rest of the company.

Reese also values communication and mentions “compassion” and “sensitivity” towards others as helping her empathize with their perspective. She describes her tendency for doing this by having

an appreciation for the complexity that other people are dealing with, and that some of the complexity that can't actually be solved.

understanding and being compassionate toward the different entities involved, and how people could feel like we were stepping on their toes, and feeling more compassionate about how uncomfortable process was for some people.

Justin compares leading in a business environment to leading his rock band. He speaks nostalgically about the “democratic relationships” that existed amongst the band members. “It’s like if you’re the singer and you’re kind of naturally the person that people gravitate towards as the leader.” Justin recently attained a leadership role in his organization due to his manager’s recognition of his potential:

When I started at this company, I never had any aspiration of being a manager of people, but my boss always I think saw that in me.

In a business environment the concept of being someone’s “boss” still feels “weird.”

I like being in a more socialistic environment where everybody’s kind of equal and we interact.

Justin continues by referring to how his “ease of interaction with people” seems to support his leadership effectiveness. He credits his band interactions as the source of learning these skills. Yet, describing himself as a “non confrontational person,” he wonders if one day this will be seen as a leadership flaw in the business environment.

Lucy describes how her relational attitude and behavior shifted a hostile situation following her company’s acquisition of another company. Rather than “marching in and

taking over” she intentionally engaged in a quieter, lower-key manner and worked in a more “subtle” way.

So I thought, you know “I’ll just be inobtrusive (*sic*), I’m going listen, I’m going to respond and ask questions and not in a manner that would make them feel like they’re being attacked.”

Janet, who is in a jobshare, co-leadership, relationship with Reese, speaks about how much she values collaboration and partnership:

I think we both realize this, when you partner it’s a whole different experience than doing something on your own. And we’re constantly brainstorming, bouncing ideas off each other, collaborating. I sort of wish we overlapped more than one day a week. It’s just the way it is and now I much prefer to work in a partnership than by myself.

I pay attention to, value, and sense my inner world. This aspect of the nontraditional leader is defined as awareness of one’s internal states and the connection between one’s inner world and external situations. This subtheme demonstrates a certain amount of self-awareness and self-knowledge, an ability to track one’s inner workings and the intrapersonal dimensions of what’s going on. Participants mindfully dealt with these states as resources, information and worthy in their own right. Whether feeling an inner sense of empowerment, frustration, centeredness, fear, anxiety, or other positive or negative states, they understand how it can be useful for them. All participants made reference to experiences in ways that indicate they pay attention to and give credence to their inner states.

This attention to inner states is demonstrated by Lucy’s story of how she prepares for entering conflicted situations (even if they involve others and she’s just a bystander):

What I found is that, if I shroud myself in that attitude of “I’m here to help,” “I’m here in service,” I’m centered, before I walk to a room, I feel like I can actually

change, when people are somewhat combative... It changes, it shifts. And I believe you can really do that.

My energy shifts and that is what makes the difference. My perception and my thoughts become more positive and I am able to deflect negative dialogue and guide conversations in a more positive way. When you do not acknowledge negativity, other people pick up on that and generally become more aligned with the purpose of coming together to discuss a beneficial outcome. I mentally refuse to dance with anyone who wants to bitch and complain about an issue without demonstrating a willingness to problem solve. I constantly ask: how can we resolve this to everyone's benefit?

...and I think I've done it here, where I've walked into the conference room and just heard the combative conversations going on and I'll just sit there quietly and I will put my light out there and all of a sudden I just feel it, I just feel it... And I think other people do to... They just don't get why it's happening... they will come up to me regardless of whether I led the meeting or I was just in the meeting, they will just make a point of coming up to me and going "wow, you were really great in that meeting"... And I never said a word; I never said much of anything... It wasn't my meeting, I was just there.

when you know how to center yourself and be quiet, you become a much better listener, you become much more attuned to when it's appropriate way to respond and what is inappropriate, and it's just appropriate to listen. And I feel that if a I do respond it should be of benefit and not just out of the sheer idea that "well, I'm here, I better participate."

In the statement above Lucy points to the "subliminal messaging that goes on in groups." She explains that maintaining a stance of centeredness and calm, a stance that is directly fed by her painting, enables her to be a "better listener" and more available to flow-oriented ways of knowing.

This theme is also vividly demonstrated in a story Bill told about a memorable day when he gathered his entire company to relay shocking news. For several months prior to this event, the mid-size internet company he had founded and was running had been in negotiations to be acquired by a much larger company. He explains the intensity of the preparations:

And in the course of ninety days, after evaluating our business, deciding they were going to buy us, giving us a contract, signing the contract, putting everything into all, you know, forty-five days of straight legal negotiation to get a hundred and twenty-page document negotiated. Then interviewed all of the employees of my company because now it's decided, it's going to go through. And so they need to figure out where they're going to put all my employees. So, they interviewed all the employees, which, of course, required that I go in front of the employees at least two, three, four times, selling my employees on this so that when they talk to [the acquiring company] they're enthusiastic about it. And most of them, it was pretty easy because they were going to get a big chunk of money, and so they were very, very enthusiastic about it.

However, three days before the deal was to be closed and Bill's employees would begin their new positions with the acquiring company, the acquiring company pulled out of the deal. Bill had to announce this extremely disappointing news to his employees and quickly reverse the morale drop. He did this by first tuning into his own emotions about the situation and used them communicate in a moving way with his audience:

You are feeling these emotions yourself as the artist and as leader...I would argue that if you're not also moved by your own statement, then they won't be, either.

I channeled my own complete disgust with the way they (the acquiring company) managed the process, my own complete denial that I was in that it was a good direction for the company. Because it really wasn't. It was a great financial outcome, but (the acquiring company) has a history of buying companies and shutting them down. And you know, and (the acquiring company) was all based on artificial intelligence and scaling through CPUs, and (our company) was all about humans and human collaboration and crowd sourcing. So culturally it just didn't [fit]-- but we had convinced ourselves in our heads, because of the money we were getting, that this was a good idea. And once that moment came and the deal was closed, all of those repressed emotions about, 'wait is minute'--part of it was a survival instinct, where it's like you need to, but a lot of it was true, real feelings that we had for years that just came rushing out. And I just channeled that personal emotional experience into a story, into a story that I told my team that they knew was true, you know. And that had an impact, you know.

Although Bill's primary artistic medium is film-making, he frequently uses metaphors related to painting to describe organizational and leadership activities. In the statement

below, he uses the word “paint” to signify both internal and external resources he used to create an evocative message for his employees.

Taking all of the paint I had, everything I could find, in realtime, taking everything I had to paint a picture and drive a message and get people to move past it. That was, in my opinion, that was--I mean, if I could have had somebody with a big drum going, "gum-gum-gum-gum," you know, whatever, I would have. There was no sound track to this meeting, but it was like that. There is an art to leadership that is very much like creating a performance that drives people to a certain emotional conclusion, just like a painting or just like a movie. And, you know, it's sort of a never-ending movie, but that's the way I saw it. That's the one that, I mean, because that was the hardest one I ever did. It may-- probably I'll die, that'll be the hardest conversation I've ever had with the staff.

Other participants also mention how when and what they say is guided by their internal sense rather than speaking just because they should be. For instance, Justin talks about how during meetings he'd rather listen than talk unless he has something substantial to contribute:

It's so obvious when you see somebody who's just sort of like--wants to hear himself talk and say the right thing in front of the right people. I don't think I ever do that. I just rather would not say anything. And maybe sometimes that's probably bad but I think that also--people always invited me to their meetings and half the time I never say anything and I never contribute but I'm just there because I feel like maybe they like having me there. Maybe when I do open my mouth, they respect what I say.

There's just this whole range of how passive you can be, how aggressive you can be. How confident you can be. There's always this fine line of overdoing something. And I think that--I don't know. I've always had a pretty good sense of--I don't know if it's just how I was brought up or with friends or everything; I've always had this kind of sense of where that line is a little bit.

Another participant, Ethan, describes himself as a “shape-shifter.” Reminiscent of, but distinctly different from, being a chameleon to adapt oneself to the other, being a shape-shifter involves greater consciousness of one's internal state, not just changing one's external behaviors. This is partly reflected by Ethan's high value for integrity: “I

have to believe in what I'm doing." Yet, at the same time, he points to change and flux as the natural state of reality:

it's hard to have a blueprint, because the blueprint is constantly changing; our products are constantly changing and so are people's opinions about them.

I live in the hyphen between “artist-leader.” This aspect of the nontraditional leader theme describes the experience of living in-between the two worlds of being an artist *and* a leader. It entails identifying with both personas. Living in the *hyphen* between artist-leader involves grappling with how to integrate these seemingly opposing identities. Sometimes this tension is successfully resolved and sometimes it is not. Six participants spoke about this subtheme.

One participant, Ethan, seeded the phrasing for this aspect of the non-traditional leader by explaining how he's tried to come to terms with actively living both sides:

I think it's more of a hyphenated sort of existence. [I've been] trying to find the connection between [my] corporate identity and [my] artistic identity; and the identities that I found was that the corporate side of it allowed me to be a leader; my artistic side allowed me to be an artist who could emote something deep within them and present it to the world.

When does the leader take over for the artist, or is the artist always there with the leader, or are they the same thing, or do you have multiple personality disorder?

Leadership is about understanding, again, the big picture. An artist is very emotional about what they're creating and you need that emotion to entice the audience and draw them in. A leader needs to understand that you also need structure to hold and bind everything together. I'm not saying that being a leader and an artist are not the same. I guess I would say there's a hyphen there.

Another participant, Terry, describes himself as "an artist who's in business." He explains how this is a "balancing act" that he has not yet mastered, but is "getting better at integrating." Distinguishing between the "artist archetype" and the "business archetype," he explains that he identifies more with the former but appreciates the importance of the latter.

What has worked for me is following the artist archetype rather than the professional or business archetype.

The artist archetype is that you have your own creative mission, it's lifelong, there's no retirement. You work for the trance. The trance is in charge. That's your boss. God is your boss or whatever, wherever that creative trance comes from. You do everything you can to not be conventional. You live in the symbolic and you figure out how to communicate the symbolic into the literal, and you live in this state of creative desperation to get this all done in an intense kind of life and death trance.

In doing so, he seeks to create an organization around himself with people who embody the business archetype and seeks to partner with them. Equating the business side with “the practical” and the artistic side with “the symbolic” and “unconventional,” Terry discusses the intentionality with which he seeks to infuse the two in his organization. Using musical terms to capture his artistic view of organizational life, Terry talks about “the vibrational field” and “resonance states” that comprise organizational dynamics. He continues by explaining that the business is the “platform” and “support” “to be able to manifest the trance in a more real [and] practical way.”

Another participant, Bill, describes himself as “a leader who uses artistic techniques to create the desired emotional reaction.” As the CEO of his organization, he describes his role as “creating the paint, canvases, and brushes” for others to create with. As a former filmmaker, he talks about using “cinematography to create investor presentations” (more elaborations about this in the section below on storytelling), and other ways to build interest and engagement through “entertainment.”

Reese’s story is a wonderful example of successfully living in and integrating the two worlds. During childhood and while growing up, Reese describes how art-making was always a big part of her life while she was growing up. However, upon entering college, she was encouraged to choose a practical career path instead of an artistic one.

She resolved her dilemma of wanting to keep artistry active in her life *and* having a practical career by choosing to become an architect.

I was able to really express myself artistically, but at the same time, feel like I was on a true career track.

Even though her leadership role today is no longer architecture related, this lens continues to inform her worldview. For instance, during our interview conversation, Reese speaks frequently about “drafting solutions,” “sketching” and “drawing up things” when referring to her leadership activities.

Further evidence of living-in-the-hyphen as an element of the nontraditional leader is illustrated by the frequent use of artistic language during interview conversations. This language indicates a strong identification with the artist and yet provides the context of living in the business world. A number of examples are sprinkled throughout this entire Findings chapter and in this section, such as in Reese’s story in the paragraph above.

Another vivid example of artistic language is provided by Lucy who uses “blank canvas” to describe the projects she manages:

We have this blank canvas, “where we going” “what are we doing,” “what’s the end results,” “what is it supposed to look like?”

Later in the conversation Lucy likens herself to other artists as she explains how she considers it the highest form of flattery when others take credit for her ideas.

People get upset about that, [but] I think it’s the highest form of flattery. Seriously, think about it, any artist who so you, any musician...the highest form of flattery for them if somebody else singing their song. For a painter the highest form of flattery is somebody trying to copy their style or technique or their painting. I feel like in business it’s the same way, I know it sounds odd, but it makes me feel...It kind of tickles me, from the inside out...It just makes me feel really good.

In another example of using artistic language to describe leadership, Bill points to the notion of “the curator” as

Someone who basically is able to understand the strengths of all of the assets around them from a people standpoint and build a story again that is based on this sort of artistic expression and lead people to conclusions.

Bill juxtaposes this with a more traditional and less artistic approach to leadership as that that is still held by many companies. He cites a well-known company that embraces a more traditional view that informs how they promote for product manager (mini-CEO) positions from people with engineering and computer science backgrounds.

[They] believe that these people only come out of engineering, that they're only computer scientists, right. And they tend to be data driven and frankly less-creative people. But I think there are others, of which I am of the belief that it's actually more of the curator, a curator in the artistic sense.

I am a storyteller. This subtheme of the nontraditional leader is defined as using the aesthetic techniques of storytelling to resonate with others and help them connect more deeply with the issue that's being communicated: The use of aesthetic techniques to formulate a story, include framing and shaping issues, in a way that evokes an emotional affect from the listener. Furthermore, being a good storyteller involves not only crafting and speaking the story, but embodying it as well; truly owning the narrative so it is not only told but also exuded by the leader.

Two participants, both of whom have experiences with film-making, talked directly and extensively about the importance of storytelling. Ethan and Bill both consider storytelling to be key to motivating and engaging others whether they be employees, clients, board members, or other stakeholders. As Bill explains it, he's often looking for “connections that tell a story.” Similarly, Ethan talks about how good stories cause people to care. Using the term “story” over 40 times in our conversation, he

emphasizes the importance of not just “telling” but “showing.” He illustrates this by recalling a experience where he was responsible for an organizational change project entailing new software implementation. As he explains:

Doing a software implementation in showing how systems are connecting to each other is not sexy at all. So you better make the subject really interesting and get people to identify.

Drawing on his experience of having made documentary films, Ethan created a video of his organization’s CEO telling the story of the evolution of the company and where it was going and how this new system would take the company to the next level. He describes coaching the CEO on storytelling prior to the filming of the video, and the success it resulted in:

I asked him a few questions, very leading questions, to get him comfortable. And I remember thinking “I have to put him at ease.” “I’m gonna have to ask him something now that’s either going to draw him to me to give me what I want or this is going to be so flat that it’s going to be a disaster.” So I looked at him and I said “look, you’re the only CEO in the room, why is this implementation so important and critical to this company?” And the moment I said that, it seems like he fell into his own zone. All the defenses went down, and the video was a huge success. I mean...The project managers and [from the software vendor] that saw it, they wanted to use it immediately, it was like a gift, “we can show this to our clients” this is how you do a successful implementation.”

Bill also recalled an experience that illustrates his passion about the importance of storytelling. He talks about a situation where he and two of his executives were preparing for an important board presentation and what they did to create a compelling story/presentation.

There was a fight going on between two of my executives over what this story should look like and belief in the story and how to tell the story and the story was boring or it's not interesting. This had been going on for some time and now it was my turn, as the CEO, to come in and resolve it. So I shut the door of the room. The three of us are in the room. There was a white board behind me. I'm, like, "Okay, tell me your version of the story." He tells me his boring version of the story. Then the other guy tells me his boring version of the story. I'm, like,

"All right. Since we think in terms of making points and moving onto the next point, let's draw it." On the white board, I drew a square. Over it, I wrote Scene 1. I said, "Imagine I'm telling you a story. Remember, this is a story, a narrative. So what is scene 1? What is the emotion you want your audience, namely the board, to feel? What do you want to convey in this scene? Let's talk about it in terms of scenes." That's literally what we wrote. We were, like, okay, scene 1 is-- meanwhile, in the last episode of [the company], this is what happened, like a Batman episode from the '60s. We're sort of saying we don't need to spend a lot of time on the past. We're going to spend time on- we're going to just sort of catch you up on the story as it is today and spend the first scene, the first slide, it turns out, it becomes a slide, on this part of the story. We draw the story arc, very much like writing or like film that goes through about nine scenes and takes you through this narrative. There is a beginning, there is a middle and there's an end. By the way, the end is 18 months from now and where we're going to be financially [in great shape]. We've organized this literally like you're bringing a person through a movie.

Later in the conversation Bill reiterates the importance of storytelling to leadership, especially as it related to motivating and inspiring employees. Comparing leaders to artists he explains how storytelling is about “drawing pictures with words or concepts”:

A mental picture that is engaging and entertaining and driving an emotional reaction. I think a lot of artists would say that they don't necessarily know what the emotion is they're trying to create. They just want to know that they've created some kind of reaction. Like, someone sees it, processes it and has some kind of reaction to it. And I think that a leader is very much the same way. You might have a specific emotion you're trying to create, but you're using these techniques, these artistic techniques to effectively create that reaction. You know, storytelling is--there's lot of different ways to tell stories, right? You can tell it visually, you can tell it, you know, in an auditory way. You can tell it, you know, through acts and through physical activity, through the way you move your arms around, through music, you know, and through melody, and maybe through the use of compelling semiotics or examples laid out in such a way that creates a sort of emotional effect. And I think that all those things are true. When you're standing in front of an audience of your employees and you're trying to lead them to a conclusion.

There is vast intelligence in the non-verbal and non-intellectual. This aspect of the nontraditional leader involves recognizing the merits of the symbolic, energetic and non-cognitive. It entails appreciating and working with information presented through these nonintellectual ways of experiencing and engaging with others on the non-verbal

level. It includes paying attention to and working with the power of one's intention, the vibrational qualities of a situation, and non-verbal cues provided by others. It also includes one's use of spiritual principles to make sense of and engage with what's going on. Five of our eight participants mentioned this aspect of the nontraditional leader.

Our former filmmaker and current CEO, Bill, talks about using non-verbal means to maintain both his own and others' attention and get his messages across:

In business and in leadership, entertainment is a component of it. If I'm bored, someone else is going to be bored. So I want to capture interest through entertainment and through a very visual and physical act. I stood up, for example, at this point. Stood in front of the board. I'm waving my arms around. I'm drawing boxes. I'm bringing people into this process. It's a lot more entertaining for myself in terms of self stimulation it keeps me engaged too.

Lucy explains how she affects change by her mere presence. "You don't have to be outspoken about it," she says. Rather, it's about "the power of the energy you carry with you." She describes how, by simply shifting her attitude, she's able to subliminally and non-verbally express herself in ways that evoke a cooperative atmosphere:

I shroud myself in that attitude of "I'm here to help," "I'm here in service," I'm centered, before I walk to a room, I feel like I can actually change, when people are somewhat combative...It changes it shifts. And I believe you can really do that.

Lucy elaborates on how she is able to enter and maintain this stance, crediting her artistic practices with providing her a place to hone and build these "muscles." She begins by describing the difficulty of entering this state in the midst of everyday commotion at work:

when you're surrounded by other people, if you haven't done it a lot and you haven't been in that space a lot, or that zone a lot, it's harder to find that space when you're surrounded by other people... by their energy and their speech in their intentions...

But drawing on the centering capacities she built during her painting immersions, she is

able to put on her “cocoon” and find a sense of “calmness,” “inner peace,” and the quiet within herself.

(When painting) it’s quiet, you’re completely silent within yourself, you are so focused. The more you’re working on something, the more you get into something, you get into the zone and this quiet space.

I think it’s stays with me, it helps me center and it gives me that empowerment...no matter what comes my way.

This subtheme of appreciating non-cognitive intelligence also show up in the way Justin describes his disregard for “planning.” Rather than “over-thinking” and “over-talking,” Justin prefers to “put everything into every moment.” He likes to “keep a nimble mind” and “create it as you go.”

I don’t like planning stuff out because it never happens that way. You can plan things to a certain extent but it’s pretty rare that any plan is going to manifest itself in the way that you planned it. So I think just do your thing and end up where you end up. And you can do anything really if you have the right attitude I think.

I’m a huge believer in not over talking and over thinking things. That’s one of the things that I actually don’t like about being a leader is people expect a lot of times for this--I want to see sort of the road map and the plan. And it’s like, “Fine, I’ll go through the motions and put this plan on paper but it’s not gonna end up [the way we planned it].”

It’s just sort of a nod at a process. And people always try to put these plans in place way too early I feel like. Like, you have to let things kind of settle and happen in their own kind of organic way most of the time.

The nonverbal, nonintellectual aspect of the nontraditional leader also shows up in participants’ experiences involving how they are guided by spiritual principles. For instance, Terry reads out a quote that connects one’s commitment with the rallying of synchronous forces to bring one’s intention to manifestation:

Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation) there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans:

that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would come his way. Whatever you can do or dream, you can begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.

Terry and other participants allude to working at more than the “physical level,” taking into consideration what’s going on at the “heart level” and “soul level” too. Often, this involves the “emotional” and “intuitive” as described more fully earlier in this section.

Two of our participants talk about how they tend to take a “zen” approach, one where they’re fully appreciating the “present moment.” A particularly interesting example of this is Justin whose philosophy of life is about “just show up...fully.” Lucy, who earlier in our findings discussion talked about the analogous nature of art-making and meditation, also mentions eastern spiritual philosophies, including Buddhism as informing her approach to leadership.

Using the “monk with an artist’s palette” as a metaphor for her leadership approach, Lucy, our participant who is an executive by day and painter by night, explains how her leadership stance is informed by her spirituality. The evolution of her leadership style has gone from being based on having outer strength to being based on inner strength; from being on a “complete power trip” to that of engaging in a more “power from within” way and serving the “greater purpose.”

Terry is also especially conscious of how his leadership is informed by his spirituality. He cites the “bodhissathva” precept as “the deeper ethic” underlying his intention to “serve to the max.” Terry cites his spiritual guru to describe the path he

follows with his leadership, saying: “Do all the good you can to all the people you can with all the time that you can.”

Other Interesting Data

This section includes other interesting findings that do not neatly fit into the previous sections.

Steve Jobs. Three of our eight participants mentioned Steve Jobs as an exemplar of artistic leadership. Completely unsolicited, at various and differing points in the conversation, participants brought up Jobs’ name. Jobs was the only business leader positively referenced during any of the participant interviews. One participant mentioned Nelson Mandela, one mentioned Frank Lloyd Wright and Thomas Jefferson, another mentioned Miles Davis, one mentioned Carlos Castaneda, and yet another mentioned Francis Ford Coppola as people they are either inspired by or identify with. One participant mentioned Donald Trump as the antithesis of what she’s all about as a leader. The names of two artists, Jackson Pollack and Matisse were mentioned in a different context.

The three participants who mentioned Jobs made remarks about him “being a very creative person,” someone who “would think differently and that he’s more of a creative side of things,” and as someone who represents “the artist archetype.” One participant mentioned that he’s been compared to Steve Jobs because of his imaginative perspective.

There will be more discussed about the implications of this finding in the next chapter.

Parenting. Five of the eight research participants are parents. Some have young children, some have teenagers, and some people’s kids are in college or have graduated

and are pursuing independent lives. In all cases, however, these parent-participants alluded to their children during the interviews. In nonspecific contexts, they made mention of their children's lives and their experiences as a parent. In a couple situations, the participants talked about how busy they are as working parents with young children and they don't have time anymore to engage in their artistic activities, except with the children. For instance, one participant mentioned that they have a musical household with lots of "piano and guitar playing and singing." She also delighted in thinking about how she draws a lot with her daughter.

One participant went as far as attributing his most important leadership lessons to those he learned as a parent. Citing "parenting as the ultimate training ground for artistry in leadership" he explains:

Kids are autonomous beings. You need to ultimately convince them they need to engage. I think, like, if you talk to educators who are like the best processes in education are when the children want to learn. Okay. So, if you think about parenting as your job is to not necessarily be the one always who is teaching, but your job is to inspire and create the environment where that happens.

I think maybe one common thread between all parenting is that there's a certain art to it. It's not just a list of bullet points on things that you should do. There's a kind of intuition and inspiration, and every parent can tell you that there's a gut component to everything they do.

A simple analogy to that would be, you know, you might choose to hang certain artwork in your child's room, you know, when they're very little. What goes through your mind when you're doing that? What's the canvas you're painting that is trying to create some kind of investment in these ideas? When you read them stories, what stories do you choose to read them that are going to move them in a particular direction and maybe engage their brain in a particular way.

I feel like being a parent equipped me in many ways to be a leader because I was aware of those sorts of steps: telling stories, painting pictures, semiotics, because children are just so emotive and when it's successful in ways adults really frankly are not.

More about the implications of this finding will be discussed in the next chapter.

Participants' learnings from the interview conversations. Another interesting finding that did not fit into the thematic analysis but is nonetheless worthy of mention is participants' feedback about engaging in the interview conversations. Specifically, toward the end of our conversations, six participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk about how their artistic sensibilities spill over into their organizational leadership. Their comments indicate that participating in these conversations shed light on things participants were previously not conscious of and thus produced new *learnings* and insights for them. This is not a surprising finding since participants in phenomenologically oriented research conversations tend to gain greater awareness into their behavior and experiences. Yet, this finding is significant enough to include in this report and one whose significance will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Comments from four participants illustrate the impact of the interview conversation on generating new perspectives and understandings for participants. For instance, one participant said he was "surprised" by seeing the connection between his artistic sensibilities and his organizational leadership. Now that he sees the link, he is interested in further exploring how he can more deliberately leverage his artistic impulses at work.

When I think about my day-to-day activities, I certainly don't tie it often to my training in film or broadcasting. I don't think about it that way. Even this thing about writing down the scene: It didn't even occur to me until we were sitting down having this conversation that that's a movie technique. And I even called it "scene," you know. But yeah, I mean, you're basically drawing attention to something that probably should have been more obvious to me before, maybe. I don't know. But it also begs the question of, you know, how I could be more proactive in applying it.

Considering that art is all senses, it does make me wonder whether or not the environment that you put your employees in and what you could do with those environments to change behavior and to maybe push towards a particular common goal, that you don't think about besides.

...and how does art and artistic method, if you will, how does it continually engage and motivate people? And that's, I don't know, I'll have to try some things.

A second participant describes how engaging in the interview conversation ignited a reflective process that produced greater self-understanding:

Several of your questions set off sort of an inquisitive side of me, asking myself more about my relationship to the people that I direct, people that I create with. I never had a hypothesis or an explanation for some of the things that I have done... I started thinking about the things that I do unconsciously to do that and there is a thought leadership associated with that, but I never would have considered it. I never would have used that framework to describe it.

A third participant also has a similar reaction in gaining more clarity about herself and her values, and sees new possibilities for moving forward in applying her heightened consciousness to her leadership work.

[I see that] I do still have creative outlets, I just didn't realize what they were. And how much different forms of aesthetic expression have played a role in my past. And how powerful that is in business, that you have the ability to feel confident around that creative expression, to express ideas. So I think that tie has been made for me, where I know, I always know, I love brainstorming and thinking of new ideas and pushing the envelope. But it's interesting to think why that's so important to me.

So I think even being more creative and thinking more out of the box, and just knowing how important that is to my core values, and feeling really comfortable, expressing that and carving out more time for that, because sometimes I think we get so bogged down in the details, that we stop to think about...We don't stop to rethink what we're even doing in the first place, so just carving out more time for that, really visionary thinking, and carving out more time for other people to do that, too.

Commentary from a fourth participant again demonstrates increased self-knowledge about how she experiences the world and behaves in it:

You've really helped me crystallize the transformation that I've never really had the opportunity to put this into words so thank you for that. What I discovered is that there really has been a shift—I've never really thought about articulating the power trip coming from without and then coming from within, so that was a pretty big revelation for me. Then just being able to articulate how I really feel about things now. Where it was a more of a directive of doing what another

person thinks I should be doing, to where now I'm feeling like am I doing what feels right to me, am I treating this person in a way that's respectful and that's right for me instead of what could be dictated from a corporate perspective.

Post-interview participant feedback. A final finding of interest relates to the level of engagement by participants after the interview conversation was completed. Specifically, there were three follow-up communications after each interview was conducted. In each case, every participant responded back, frequently with substantive feedback, reflections, and thoughts.

The first post-interview communication consisted of a “thank you email” I sent to express my gratitude about their participation in the interview conversation and to remind them to pay close attention to new revelations that may occur during the preceding week. (At the close of the interview conversations I told participants that new connections may emerge for them and it would be valuable if they captured these ideas and sent them to me). All participants responded back agreeing to do this. Several committed to keeping a log in a draft email that they could send me at the end of the week.

The second post-interview communication consisted of a “reminder” email I sent them one week later to ask for their input about any new revelations that may have emerged. Five of the eight participants provided new information. Some were a few sentences long while others were over a page. This information was bundled together with the transcripts and is reflected in the thematic analysis.

The final post-interview communication consisted of me sending participants a copy of their narrative descriptions to ask for feedback about accuracy and new insight produced while reading it. Every participant commented back about the accuracy of the narratives. In three cases there were minor tweaks to make the stories more precise. In all

cases, participants expressed gratitude at being able “to see the interview summed up this way” and being able to read about themselves in the third person. In reading about himself, one participant wrote back, “sounds like an interesting guy!” Another participant described it as a “character study” and described how he enjoyed reading it: “What's struck me the most was reading about my life in the third person. I've never had that experience before. It was like watching a movie about my life.”

Other comments spoke to what participants gained from the process of reading about themselves in these narrative summaries. For instance one participant wrote about how he gained “More clarity about who I am, what I'm doing and how [my company] fits into that” and how he's now “taking myself more seriously as having thought through the process of the life I'm creating.” Another participant gained “Inspiration that I'm on the right track.” Reflecting on several new presentations he made since our interview, a participant said “Reading your description makes me wonder if I shouldn't construct a talk even more like one writes a screenplay: Story arc, climax, etc.” Yet another said “Upon reading it, my fears about my managerial style seem to be at ease and it all makes sense.”

Chapter 5: Reflections

In art, the hand can never execute anything higher than the heart can imagine.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Discussion

The intent of this dissertation study was to investigate the phenomenon of how artistic sensibilities inform organizational leadership. From having executed a deliberate and careful process of inquiry, we can now address the findings and further implications of the initial research question “How does one’s artistic sensibilities enhance their leadership effectiveness?”

This dissertation sheds light on a phenomenon that is easily missed or hidden--even from those who might exemplify the relationship--that of how artistic sensibilities inform organizational leadership. The stories and examples elicited from the research participants, and their feedback during the interview and after, suggest they were barely conscious of the degree their approach to organizational leadership had been influenced and shaped by their artistic sensibilities. One of the key insights of the study was the degree participants became more consciously aware of how their leadership approach was positively influenced by their aesthetic experiences.

The new knowledge provided by this study enables us to begin mapping out the emerging territory of imaginative leadership. It is the intent of this final chapter to share my research-based reflections and impressions about the importance of this topic.

The data presented in this dissertation research suggests that engaging in aesthetic experiences enhances one’s ability to relate to the world in more relational and creative ways. Specifically, the capacities gained from engagement with aesthetic experiences

seem to enable people to attune more fully and express themselves more fully. This enriched stance of more robust attunement and expression seems to support a more satisfying and intelligent way of being for the leader.

In 1934, John Dewey described art as *a quality of experience*. He coined a term, *aesthetic experience*, to capture this quality of experience. Today, many philosophers, especially educational reformers, draw upon Dewey's seminal thinking. The insights provided by this dissertation research suggest that Dewey's thinking about the merits of aesthetic experience may offer as much to the field of organizational leadership as they do to education.

Dewey (1934) constructed a model describing the benefits of aesthetic experience. According to this model, the benefits accrue at both the individual and collective levels. At the individual level they bring greater satisfaction and meaning to a person. This spills over to the interpersonal realm because aesthetic experiences expand our capacity for both empathy and cognitive growth. As we move to the larger collective realm, we find additional benefits in the form of social bonds and expression of communal meaning.

As we will discuss shortly, Dewey's view about the importance of aesthetics is one of several theories that align with our research findings. Other important theoretical contributions are offered by Mary Parker Follett (1924, 1949), Ellen Langer (1989, 2005), Ken Robinson (2009, 2001/2011), Donna Ladkin (2006, 2008) and many others who were cited earlier in the conceptual framing of this study.

Based on the findings from this study, four key assertions stand out about how artistic sensibilities spillover into leadership effectiveness. In total, they support the hypothesis that intentionally and consciously engaging in aesthetic pursuits can be a

catalyst for shifting organizational leaders into a more satisfying and effective way of being. The four assertions are that artistic sensibilities enhance organizational leadership by fostering greater relational awareness, mindful engagement, creative imagination, and inspired states of being. These assertions will be discussed in the following pages, and then I will share my impression of why they are important and their implications.

The first assertion is that artistic sensibilities increase the relational awareness of organizational leaders. By relational awareness I mean both internal attunement to our emotions, feelings, and impulses and external attunement to others and the conditions of one's environment. What do our findings suggest about how this increased awareness occurs? It seems this unfolds in four primary ways.

First, artistic sensibilities appear to create a greater degree of openness. By openness we mean receptivity to seeing and feeling more of what is there, the nuances and shades of meaning and feeling not visible to the literal eye. Openness enables the imagination to further expand, creating additional associations that may prove useful. Imagination, a faculty developed by engagement in artistic and aesthetic endeavors, plays a key role here. As discussed in the literature review, imagination entails opening our hearts and minds to seeing more. It has been argued that imagination is a precursor to empathy. Our research findings provided ample evidence of how our artist-leaders felt a sense of empathy and compassion toward others. Time and again we saw our participants engaging with others with an open heart and open mind.

Second, the greater degree of openness tends to foster deeper levels of curiosity. As we noted in the literature review, "Curiosity enables us to be fallible and reduces our fear of mistakes and failing. In being curious we are interested and inquisitive, searching and

exploring for the sake of discovering what we don't yet know" (Serifsoy, Chapter 2). When we are curious we want to know more; thus we enjoy looking longer, pondering further. We become intrigued and fascinated and this motivates us to seek more and look deeper, which in turn brings us into greater intimacy and relatedness with the source of our attention. We saw this frequently in the findings as freedom from fear, defensiveness, and a need to be right or have all the answers, a freedom that enabled actions such as asking different kinds of questions to understand what others care about and being inquisitive of what others are doing not because one wants to control or direct the other but out of sheer interest in better understanding what's happening.

Third, openness and curiosity shape our connection to others. It reduces our divisive boundaries and sense of separation and thus enables us to share feelings with others. In their study for the Getty Museum, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Robinson (1990), showed that paying deep attention to what we see or engage with results in "a sense of human connectedness." We feel a greater sense of intimacy and relatedness with that to which we curiously attend to. We saw this in the findings as the desire to resonate with others, of having an appreciation for the experience of others, and caring about other as shown in mentoring and developing employees. We also saw it in being client-focused and concerned with audience experience, feeling joyful about seeing others succeed, empowering others to be their best, and having a desire to help and be of service to others.

From openness, curiosity, and connection comes cohesion, shared understanding and shared action among people. As discussed earlier in the conceptual framework, Mary Parker Follett (1924) has greatly influenced my thinking. One of her contributions to

providing us with a more enlightened understanding of leadership as artistry involved her view about integrating differences and producing unity. Her theories about *circularity*, *mutuality*, and integrating oppositional ideas together, so that each continually informs the other, have immense relevance to contemporary organizational issues. These theories were elucidated in our findings. In various themes we saw participants describing a sense of belonging to a larger whole and making efforts to integrate opposites within this larger whole. Through efforts to create open communication, harmonize the organization, reconcile differences and resolve conflicts our participants applied many of Follett's theories. Through their collaborative and democratic stances and actions they gave life to Follett's aesthetically oriented philosophies about organizations and leadership.

The second assertion of these findings is that artistic sensibilities enhance mindfulness. Ellen Langer's (2005) approach to *mindful engagement* is especially resonant. Mindful engagement enables us to be fully absorbed in an experience without getting distracted by a discussion with ourselves, without self talk or attempts to follow a script. Being mindfully engaged enables us to fully attune to the present moment of what's happening, to see and sense what's going on, and to be aware of what we feel in response to what's going on. As Langer pointed out, and as we have seen in our findings, "When we live our lives mindlessly, we don't see hear, taste or experience much of [what's going on]...we are essentially 'not there' to notice much of the world around us. An artistic activity is one way to help us move from excessive mindlessness to a more mindful life (p. xvii)."

In our study we found that participants' experience of their art-making has much relevance to mindful engagement. Participants repeatedly mentioned how they entered

flow states of being in-the-zone, deeply attuning to the matter at hand and often accessing knowledge they didn't realize they had. During these experiences of mindful engagement they often experienced an altered sense of time where their envelopment in what they were doing was so intense that time seemed to disappear. Yet, at the same time as being completely focused and attentive to what was happening in the present moment, they experienced a heightened sense of enlivenment, able to act spontaneously, make decisions and access knowing that was sometimes described as a different intelligence working through them. One participant even made reference to being in a "meditative state" when engaged in artistic activities.

The third assertion from our findings is that artistic sensibilities enhance the creative imagination of organizational leaders. By creative imagination we mean artistic impulses that involve attuning to information not readily available in the data and expressing oneself in courageous, authentic, unconventional and evocative ways. Creative imagination is shown to be a key component in one's ability to assess situations and solve problems using divergent thinking. As cited in our literature review by the Nobel Prize winning scientist, Charles Nicolle, "the disclosure of a new fact, the leap forward, the conquest over yesterday's ignorance, is an act not of reason but of imagination, of intuition. It is an act closely related to that of the artist and of the poet; a dream that becomes reality; a dream which seems to create" (Root-Bernstein, p. 11). We see this same thinking again in Dewey's philosophy: "Creative imagination's goal is free play of the self's faculties. Its function is to seize meaning and embody it in sensuous form to give rise to feeling, thus representing the freely acting subjective self" (Leddy, 2006, p. 6).

Our findings included a multitude of examples relating participants' ability to access and use their creative imagination. We saw this in how our leaders drew from an expanded repertoire of what was described in the literature review as presentational and experiential knowledge. Our leaders did this by including the non-verbal, the symbolic, the energetic, the intuitive, the narrative, and the emotional. A vivid example of this was the leader who had to reframe the aborted purchase of his organization and created new narrative for his employees to accept the situation. Consistent with the work of several theoretical contributors earlier, these expanded forms of knowledge provide access to what is otherwise tacit or hidden.

Another form of the creative imagination in leadership is improvisation. As described in our literature review, improvisation is an emergent rather than planned process that relies on a playful orientation and often results in innovative outcomes. We saw this in how our participants sought to figure things out, often by engaging with others in playful, spontaneous encounters and crafting new meanings together.

We also saw how participants eschewed the tried and true in favor of the new and different. This impulse promotes creative imagination: the drive to seek out new and unique ways of sense-making opens the doorway to seeing new possibilities. As with improvisation, interest in the new and different requires us to engage in a continuous learning and inquiry process. In our findings we witnessed a certain savviness that participants had in seeking, accessing and working with alternative ways of knowing in service of being able to innovative. First in seeing more and then in translating that new information through themselves into action, offering a unique expression.

The fourth assertion is that artistic sensibilities result in powerful and inspired states that include emotional vitality, contagious energy, and higher frequencies of connection to self and others. Both theoretical arguments and participant interviews indicated that engagement in artistic pursuits cultivates one's ability to use creative processes, which in turn generates a sense of empowerment, fulfillment, and a paradoxical combination of passion, intensity, drama together with lightness, joy, and playfulness. This also aligns with my personal experience of engaging in art-making. For instance, during my two-year Expressive Arts training with Natalie Rogers, I experienced firsthand the internal shift that occurs when we reach down into the wellspring of our creative essence. From this internal shift, comes a new centeredness and aliveness, noticeable not only to myself but also to others who interacted with me. In addition to experiencing a personal transformation toward these inspired states, I also observed this occurrence in many of my cohort colleagues who attended the trainings with me. They too underwent a deep transformative experience that shifted not only their internal state toward greater authentic expression and empowerment but also a metamorphosis in how they showed up --their presence was perceived by others as more compelling, attractive and powerful.

Our findings provided many examples of inspired states stemming from engagement with aesthetic experiences. Our participants spoke frequently about their experience of satisfaction, joy, delight, and their sense of personal power. Their stories demonstrated a confidence in their ability to affect change, be response-able, and act with integrity. They spoke of their ease of interaction with others, feeling centered, using their self as an instrument, being a shape-shifter, and their ability to deal with flux, change, chaos without getting disoriented or overwhelmed.

My personal experience of participants during our conversations further confirmed their embodiment of these inspired states. What was not as apparent in the transcripts but was available to me personally was the sense of aliveness each participant demonstrated. For instance, what is partly in evidence through the audio recordings is how much laughter occurred in the large majority of the interview conversations. Despite my deliberate attempts to stay in neutral “interviewer mode,” I found myself enthusiastically drawn into the world of these artist-leaders, living vicariously through them and enjoying the ride. This ability to draw others in through the contagious affect of their fun-loving orientations and positive emotions may be the result of what Renee Levi (2003b) called “rhythm entrainment,” a resonance that occurs on an energetic and physical level between human beings (p. 267). These inspired states fit what Donna Ladkin described as one’s positive *aesthetic presence*. Ladkin (2009) used the term aesthetic to speak to the “dimension of perception [of] the physically-based ‘felt sense’ we experience of other people” (p. 79). We might, cautiously, admit that in addition to feeling a genuine internal sense of excitement and satisfaction, inspired states of being contribute to charismatic presence. While there are many dangers to charismatic leadership, such as witnessed with Hitler, numerous cult leaders, and even some business leaders, there is also a positive effect in the sense of being highly inspirational. The question of how artistic sensibilities might enhance one’s charisma for use in positive ways is a provocative idea that merits further research.

In addition to our four assertions, I would like to offer a few other thoughts about my experience of the findings before sharing my reflections about their implications. One of these musings relates to Steve Jobs. During the earlier part of this dissertation I cited

Steve Jobs as a contemporary exemplar of imaginative leadership. (The two other exemplars, both historical figures who were not discussed in the dissertation but who inconspicuously and symbolically guided my perspectives, were Martha Graham and Leonardo DaVinci). While Steve Jobs was not a huge part of this dissertation, I feel compelled to write about him here because of a subtle and noteworthy backdrop provided by his symbolic presence: not only did I mention him as an exemplar, but his name was brought up several times in the findings, and he passed away during the writing of these final dissertation chapters.

Though I personally never met Steve Jobs, I felt a certain grief upon learning of his death. Soon I realized this mourning process was being shared at a collective level, mildly reminiscent of Princess Diana's death in 1997. I recalled reading a quote in an article pondering "Without Steve Jobs as CEO, Who Would Speak for the Arts at Apple?" earlier in the year after Jobs resigned from his role:

It's in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough — it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing — and nowhere is that more true than in these post-PC devices.

Without turning this into a full-blown tribute to Steve Jobs, it is pertinent to acknowledge how he revolutionized the personal computer, music, and mobile device industries and therefore how he changed the way we live our lives. And what's especially significant to our topic of imaginative leadership is the role his artistic sensibilities played in shaping his leadership. For instance, as John Sculley explained, Jobs "always looked at things from the perspective of what was the user's experience going to be" (Kahney, 2010). Sound familiar? Our participants operated in a very similar way.

Another Jobs' quote that is reminiscent of our findings is how he had a rule (in the earlier Apple days) that the Mac team could only have 100 people: "I can't remember more than a hundred first names so I only want to be around people that I know personally. So if it gets bigger than a hundred people, it will force us to go to a different organization structure where I can't work that way. The way I like to work is where I touch everything." (Kahney, 2010). Again, especially the early part of this comment, seems to echo what we heard from the artist-leaders in our study.

Jobs' aesthetic orientation also played out in the importance he attributed to designing beautiful products, again correctly guessing that this would enhance consumers' experience of the products. He was a person of immense vision and imagination who also encouraged others to follow their artistic sensibilities. As circulated millions of times via the internet during this past month, in Jobs' now famous 2005 Sanford Commencement Speech he urged:

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma--which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.

In addition to my musings about Steve Jobs, I will offer two more ruminations about the data before moving into my reflections about the implications of the findings. One of these final thoughts has to do with parenting as a transformative learning experience that enhances imaginative leadership; the other involves the experience of the research participants in being involved in this study.

In the earlier phases of designing this study and determining what constituted 'artistic activities' required by from our research participants, I played with the idea of

including parenting as an artistic activity. Certainly it met many of the criteria around our framing of artistic sensibilities as experiences of attunement and expression. One might agree that especially in mindfully parenting young children we develop many right brain capacities similar to those associated with artists: learning to work at the non-verbal and nonrational levels, engaging in empathetic and compassionate ways of being, being engaged in immersive experiences, attending to the emotional and visceral, finding creative ways to solve problems, relying on our intuition, and so forth. However, in attempting to keep the study “clean” I chose not to include parenting as a criteria for demonstrating experience with artistic activities. It was fascinating, though, that one of my participants spoke directly to this issue. Without any prodding whatsoever from me, toward the end of our interview conversation one of our filmmakers pointed to his experience as a parent as being the most valuable source of learning imaginative leadership. This makes me wonder if maybe there’s something more to this connection between parenting and aesthetics/artistry and, if so, how it might be further explored.

Finally, I feel the need to include a short discussion about participants’ experience of their involvement in the study. As apparent both from their comments to me at the end of our interview and in subsequent email communications, participants became more consciously aware of how their leadership approach was positively influenced by their aesthetic experiences. While increased awareness of one’s experience is not an uncommon occurrence for someone who participates in a phenomenological research study, the almost unanimous degree to which participants expressed appreciation for their new understandings and their interest in applying their new consciousness amazed me.

The eagerness that participants displayed in agreeing to participate in the research combined with their initial sense that there was a connection between their artistic endeavors and their leadership but one that they were not sure they could articulate suggests that this knowledge was percolating just below the surface of awareness. The enthusiasm they expressed upon becoming more conscious of the spillover effects and what seemed like a heartfelt desire to go forth in applying this new consciousness made me realize the power of not only the phenomenon but of talking about it in concrete ways. It would be fascinating to revisit the topic with these same participants in 3-6 months to learn how they applied their new perspectives.

Implications

“The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.”

~ Marcel Proust

The close relationship between artistic sensibilities and organizational leadership has numerous implications, both for how we approach the development of leaders and organizations as well in the ripple effect throughout society-at-large. If, as this study suggests, artistic sensibilities enrich leaders' capacities for relational awareness, mindful engagement, creative intelligence and inspired states, it is in our collective interest to think in new ways about how we train and develop both existing leaders and those who are being groomed for leadership positions. The findings from this study encourage us to consider how we attend to people's aesthetic development as much as we do their intellectual savviness. From a leadership development perspective, the findings from this study suggest that we reconsider both the content offered and the methods used in executive development, coaching, and other training programs. From an organizational

development perspective, the findings suggest we address organizational initiatives and dynamics with aesthetics in mind.

There are numerous ways that aesthetically-oriented methods and content can be integrated into executive coaching, team off-sites, and training programs. Many ideas were provided earlier in this dissertation during the literature review about the marriage of leadership and artistry. A small sampling of these and other ideas include using collage-making to uncover unconscious images and messages, art-viewing and novel-reading to increase empathic capacities, reflecting together as a team on a piece of poetry to bring different views and approaches out into the open, having improvisational piano played in the background during a retreat to evoke an altered state and help people drop deeper into their experience, and improvisational music-making with indigenous instruments to build team cohesion. Engagement in these types of artistic activities followed by dialogue and reflection about the process can both build aesthetic capacities and enable us to see the hidden meanings of things we're working on.

The findings from this study also raise questions about how organizations might be served by the infusion of more aesthetically oriented initiatives to complement the practical and utilitarian means often used. We need to ask ourselves what can we do in organizational settings to deepen artistic values? How can we attend to the imaginative experience of organizational members? How can we integrate the imaginative element into our business processes? For instance, in organizational communications intended to inform and engage employees on organizational change initiatives, how might an aesthetic orientation be useful? How might it enhance the launch of a new product or system? Or to create culture change? Implications from this study suggest all our senses,

from sound to lighting, to textures and aromas evoke moods conducive to generative conversations, imaginative thinking, and community. Something as simple as redesigning work spaces to include more nature, music, art may make a big difference in shifting people to more imaginative modes. In the literature review about the marriage of leadership and artistry earlier in this study we saw many examples of how artistry is being used in organizational development work. An implication of this study is for this type of work to grow.

Activities such as strategic planning and various sorts of meetings may also benefit from approaches that activate and capture more imaginative elements and information than typical linear and logical approaches. For instance, we might give more serious consideration to theories like Henry Mintzberg's that advocate for reframing how we think about and approach strategy formation in organizations. As Mintzberg (1987) described in the passage below, it might benefit us to consider the process as one of "crafting strategy" rather than "strategic planning." He described the crafting process as being aligned with our more imaginative approach to leadership:

What springs to mind is not so much thinking and reason as involvement, a feeling of intimacy and harmony with the materials at hand, developed through long experience and commitment. Formulation and implementation merge into a fluid process of learning through which creative strategies evolve. My thesis is simple: the crafting image better capture the process by which effective strategies come to be. The planning image, popular in the literature, distorts these processes and thereby misguides organizations that embrace it unreservedly. (p 66)

Finally, organizations might consider ways to encourage existing and future employees to engage in aesthetic experiences outside of work. For instance, regularly visiting museums, engaging in art-making, attending or participating in performance arts, reading novels. Too often these activities are viewed as fun, leisure, hobbies, and

therefore their relevance as a transformative learning activity that benefits one's leadership career is dismissed; yet, these activities are likely to have an indirect but highly critical influence on one's effectiveness at work. For instance, as a result of listening differently to the conversations among instruments in a string quartet, how might we be able to single out developing and recurring themes in a work-related situation? In photographing a landscape, waiting for the perfect light, watching the transformation of the picture during varying light sequences, how might this practice enhance our ability to see and read things differently at work? There are almost endless possibilities of how we can hone our artistic sensibilities: different aesthetic practices with which to build these muscles. The first and most crucial step is giving ourselves permission to engage in them, recognizing that these are not activities to be relegated for later when we have extra time, but rather that these are core to our ability to relate to the world around us, including our work world, in wiser and more intelligent ways.

Recognizing the positive spillover effects of aesthetic sensibilities into organizational leadership also has ripple effects into a broader range of societal implications. It may be argued, though this is not the place to make a case, that corporate America is the dominant institution in today's society. Thus, what is valued by today's large business organizations tends to be emulated by other sectors in society. When business leaders embrace the existence of a connection between artistic sensibilities and enhanced leadership effectiveness, this will generate a new value system for many sectors of our society. For instance, it is likely to influence our educational system. Arts education will no longer be seen as an ancillary subject, a second class citizen to more intellectual and academic topics such as reading, writing and arithmetic. Artists and the

places they display their works such as museums and performing arts centers will no longer be seen as *leisure centers* but rather as central to the heart and soul of our society, as important (and thus deserving of funding) as scientific and military related causes.

A final reflection about what is implied by this dissertation considers a larger view into the future. While we cannot fully anticipate what the future world will look like, we can safely assume that technology will continue rapidly developing and changing the way we live and work. As Daniel Pink (2005) and Ken Robinson (2001/2011, 2009) repeatedly pointed out, the processing power of computers is accelerating at light speed. Advances in neuroscience combined with technological progress are enabling us to replicate many aspects of the human brain in a computer. As suggested by Robinson, “by 2020 it may be possible for \$1000 to buy a personal computer with the processing power of an adult brain....and further, [computers] will be able to rewrite their own operating systems based on their *experiences* [italic mine] (2011, p. 31).” If this is so and we’re competing with computers in the realm of cognitive intelligence, we might as well throw up the flag and hand the world over to robots. But, for the time being anyway, computers are not made of flesh and blood. They may be able to think, but they cannot experience the senses--the domain of the aesthetic. For the time being this is a strictly human domain. Even after we develop a hybrid species of the human-computer, which will probably occur sometime in this century, the aesthetic contribution to intelligence will be provided through the flesh and blood of the human. Given this perspective, it seems that focusing on our artistic/aesthetic development--the source of our imaginative, creative and innovative capabilities--is a promising growth area.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This final section reflects on the limitations of this dissertation research and suggests ways to design future research projects to study this topic.

Two primary elements may have caused limitations to this dissertation: (1) the size and make-up of the participant pool; (2) the challenges related to reducing one's experience to words. While this study's eight in-depth interviews yielded valuable insights to guide further inquiry, findings generated from a population this size may not be considered conclusive. It is also likely that a larger, broader, and more diversified participant base will provide a more profound understanding into how artistic sensibilities might inform organizational leadership.

The artistic sensibilities explored in this dissertation arose from activities associated primarily with playing musical instruments, musical performance, painting, woodcrafting, film-making, and gymnastics. Inclusion of a larger array of artistic activities might provide deeper insights into how artistic sensibilities inform one's way of relating to the world as an organizational leader. Expanding the levels of leadership within organizations could also prove beneficial. The leadership role held by our participants ranged from senior directors and vice presidents in large business organizations to CEO level roles in smaller more entrepreneurial organizations. Expanding this demographic to include higher level executives in large and mid-size business enterprises, as well as non-profit, educational and governmental organizations might also yield new insights.

Finally, it might be beneficial to compile a more ethnically diverse profile of participants. All the participants in this study were white Anglo-Americans. Including

participants of Asian, African, South American, Middle Eastern, and other heritages will likely provide richer findings as people from different cultural backgrounds tend to be conscious of different nuances related to their interaction with the world around them according to their cultural norms and traditions. In future research it would be wonderful to design a study similar to that conducted in this dissertation with a participant base of 40-50 leaders from a variety of organizations (non-profit, governmental, educational, etc., in addition to business), at various levels within those organizations, and who represent artistic sensibilities gained from experiences with 20 or more types of artistic activities.

The second area pertaining to the limitations of this research is the linguistic constraints that bound the data gathering, analysis, and reporting of findings. When the description of our experiences is limited to words, much can be lost in the conveyance of meaning. This pertains to both participants' ability to fully describe their experiences and my ability to fully describe my experience of the data. While analyzing the data (transcripts and other written notes) I found it helpful to frequently re-listen to sections of transcripts to gain greater meaning that was provided by the participants' vocal intonations, pauses, and so forth. Ideally, it would have been even more revealing if the interviews were videotaped. Being able to revisit the conversation and gain access to visual information provided by facial expressions, gestures, and other visual indicators would, I suspect, yield even greater perception into the full meaning of the words. It might also be helpful to keep a more elaborate field journal that records my bodily sensations and intuitive hunches; maybe a visual journal to capture my non-verbal impressions; maybe jotting a quick poem after the interview conversations to capture and express ineffable notions.

In concluding this dissertation, I would like to share two final reflections. The first relates to my experience as the researcher. Writing this dissertation has been a truly transformative, creative, spiritual, and of course intellectually stimulating experience. Above all, like a shaman who has been chosen to go on a sacred mission, I have felt honored to be a vessel for transporting this topic from its exiled existence to its rightful place among us where it can be cherished.

Finally, I chose *The Leader's Muse* as the title for this dissertation primarily on an intuitive basis. Initially, I just liked the way the three words sounded together. As I reflected further I felt especially connected to the term *muse* and its use in everyday language to connote a source of inspiration. Additional inquiry about the term elicited intrigue with its etymological connections to *amuse* and *museum*. This led to a realization about how its double use as a verb, *to muse*, honored the value I place on the importance of reflection. Pondering further about using this term in the title I was drawn to learning more about the nine muses from Greek mythology as portrayed in Angeles Arrien's (2000) work. Through Arrien's work I identified four associations with the muse that tie it to this study. First, the muses lead us further into our creative lives and artistry. Second, the muses can be thought of as the feminine principle within us. Third, the muses bring excellence, beauty, imagination, and extraordinary creativity. Fourth, the ultimate call of the muses is to live a creative, authentic, and enriched life; to be whole; and to be resourceful. The muses are about "trusting our deepest nature and authentically expressing who we are in the world in wise and life-affirming ways." (p. 5). This dissertation has been my response to the call of the muse in the same way that my participants' approach to their leadership work has been inspired by their muse.

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APPENDIX A: The Decline of Genius

The data below shows the results of a longitudinal study to determine the degree of divergent thinking that exists among the group studied. The implications are that as children grow up their ability to think divergently diminishes.

The Decline of Genius

AGE	% Testing at Genius Level
3-5	98%
8-10	32%
13-15	10%
25+	2%

* From a presentation by Ken Robinson I attended in 2008 in San Francisco.